

OLD SLEUTH'S OWN.

No. 134

FUNNY BOB;

OR IN AND OUT OF

EVERYTHING IN NEW YORK.

Fun and Adventure from the First Page to the Last.

By OLD SLEUTH.



Bob Donned the Female Attire.

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J. S. OGILVIE PUBLISHING COMPANY,
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FUNNY BOB,

OR,

IN AND OUT OF EVERYTHING IN NEW YORK.

CHAPTER I.

“ He’s lookin’ to see who throw’d the egg from the gallery.”

Two working girls were standing in front of a theatre looking at a show photograph on the board-bill, In the picture was represented a young actor who had been taken with his eyes cast upward in a semi-tragic poetic manner ; the girls were standing and gazing upon the picture ; as stated, full of enthusiastic admiration, and one of them exclaimed : “ how lovely he looks with his eyes cast heavenward ; a young gamin was standing near ; he had noticed the admiring glances cast upon the picture and overheard the exclamation ; and it was then he addressed the girls, knocking all the poetic fancy out of them with the sarcastic explanation as quoted. “ He’s lookin’ to see who throw’d the egg from the gallery.”

The girls marched off with an expression of indignation and disgust upon their faces, while the gamin chuckled at the success of his great explanation.

Two short-haired, well groomed men were standing near at the moment ; they also had overheard the girl’s expression of admiration together with the explanation of the lad, and one nudged the other with the remark :

“ He’s a dandy ; lets cod him a bit.”

The two men advanced toward the ragged lad who was about fourteen, but small for his years, and seizing him by the arm demanded :

Hello, kid, what’s your name ?”

"Bob," came the answer.

"What's your last name?"

"Me last name is 'out of sight,'" came the surprising reply.

"Your last name is 'out of sight?'"

"Yes," answered the lad and with a wink, as he sung:

"Me fore name's Bob, I'm tellin' ye;

"I've a 'cinch' on that by right;

"But when it comes to me udder one,

"Be Jim, it's only 'out of sight.'"

"Was that your father's name?"

The lad's poetry was not exactly rythmetical, but it was expressive, and he said:

"Don't ye catch on?"

"No."

"Well that's it; me last name is 'out of sight; way out of sight'; I never saw it; I never heard it; I aint got any; I'm only Bob; that's all."

"What do you do for a living?"

"Everything, but steal or lie."

"Then you never steal or lie?"

"Never."

"Do you eat?"

"Occasionally."

"Where were you born?"

"The particular spot that is honored as my birth place is like me name 'out of sight.'"

The two men were variety actors and what they thought may be discerned from the remark of one of them who said to his companion:

"Say, Dick, we can use this fellow to work in with us; he's a daisy, he is."

Variety men are always on the lookout for talent or for any peculiar character individuality, and they believed they had recognized in Bob, a "little gem."

"Where do you hang out," asked Billy Frank, the man

who had first addressed Bob, and the lad promptly rattled off the subjoined doggerel :

“ ‘There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,’

A lucky old gal was she,

For she had a place to stretch her old bones,

‘ But there’s no such place for me.’ ”

“ Dick, did you ever!” exclaimed Billy Frank.

“ You have no home,” queried Dick :

“ Me home is out of sight.”

“ Do you want a job ?

“ I do ; that’s straight.”

“ Come with us and we’ll give you a square meal.”

“ I’m wid yer ; lead on, McDuff.”

The two men led Bob to a cheap restuarant and told him to order what he wanted ; they had taken a seat in a box and had a chance to look their poetic genius over.

Bob was, as stated, about fourteen, small for his age and compactly built ; he possessed an intelligent face, a merry pair of eyes, and a general air of brightness. He was shoeless and his clothes were poor, but his face and hands were clean.

“ Can you quit ‘ coddling ? ’ ” asked Dick Small.

“ Yes, I can.”

“ How would you like to go on the stage ? ”

The boy laughed merrily and answered :

“ What would I do on the stage ? ”

“ Act of course.”

“ What would I act ? ”

“ You can learn, can’t you ? ”

“ I reckon I can.”

“ We want a good, smart ‘ kid ’ to work with us.”

“ Do I fill the bill ? ”

“ I think yon can.”

“ I’m wid yer, if it means meals and a bed and blanket.”

“ That’s what it means. And now, what do you know about yourself ? ”

“ Here I am ; that’s all I know.”

“ How long have you known you are here ?”

“ About eight years, I reckon.”

“ Tell us all you know about yourself between dates.”

Bob thought a moment and then said with a merry twinkle in his eye and a comical expression upon his face : “ I may be the son of a millionaire, a wash woman, or a gambler ; all I know is when I was six years old I was living wid an old woman down in Rose street ; the old woman gave me a cuff on the ear and said, ‘ Get out of here ; I’ve slaved long enough ’ ; I did get, and I’ve been gettin’ ever since ; it’s been a pretty tough road, but I’ve traveled right ahead, sleepin’ everywhere and anywhere, eating anything and everything, and doing anything for a few pennies. I’ve blacked boots, swept sidewalks, put in coal, sold newspapers, run errands and turned me hand to anything that brought me a cent.”

“ Can you read and write ?”

“ I can.”

“ How did you get on to that ?”

“ Going to night school.”

Dick Small and Billy Frank observed a certain peculiarity about Bob. Some times he would use the vulgarisms of the street gamins, and at other times he would talk as good English as a gentleman’s son.

“ That’s all you know about yourself ?”

“ That’s all.”

The variety men took Bob down to the theatre where they were engaged and set their heads to work to make up a scene where they could work Bob, and they were amazed at the readiness with which the lad took to it and his many suggestions, and at the end of two weeks the night arrived when Bob was to make his appearance as the “ Little Comic Wonder.” The act in which he was introduced was a success ; the gallery gods went wild over the little “ Wonder.”

and Bob was highly elated by his success, which was complete. But alas, his glory was of short duration ; he was too smart in the estimation of the stars who had employed him ; on the third night he fell off from his lines and in a lot of humorous matter of his own carried the house with him. He overshadowed his employers and when in answer to an *encore* Dick and Billy appeared on the stage without their little "Wonder," there followed a storm of hisses, proving that it was Bob whom the audience wanted ; and they yelled until he reappeared and he was received with an ovation. His employees were mad and when the play was over, one of them dealt the "Wonder" a kick that doubled him up in agony and their brutal natures aroused by jealousy prompted them to drag him to the stage door, when with another kick they sent him adrift. He had eclipsed them in their specialties, had carried the applause to himself, and that was a fatal blow to his own chances of advancement.

Bob soon recovered from the effects of the kick and lay around until he saw his late employers leave the theatre, when he stole in, got his "duds" and issued forth to meet the world with head erect and eyes looking straight forward.

As Bob walked away he muttered :

"I'll get square with those fellows ; Dick had no right to kick me ; I'll torment them for a while ; I'll play the drama of Nemesis on them, and don't you forget it, I'll make 'em very unhappy."

Bob was a powerful little fellow and considerable of a gymnast. He had exercised with boys around town, boot blacks and newsboys, and excelled them all. He was also strong and nimble, and his courage was beyond question ; indeed, it can truthfully be said of him he knew not what fear meant. He was prepared to face death under any conditions and at any time ; he had done many daring things and had always been very popular with his whilom comrades.

Bob was proceeding along the street ; it was near midnight ; he could not return to the garret where his employer had temporarily located him, and he knew that he must find a free bunk for the remaining hours of night ; as stated, he was walking slowly along waiting for what might turn up, when he saw a policeman approaching, leading a little girl ; the latter was sobbing as though her heart would break ; Bob took in the situation ; the little girl would be locked up and probably be committed to the island in the morning. He did not know what her offense was. He did not care. His sympathies were always with the poor and helpless, and he proposed to give the little girl a chance to get away. He passed the officer and his charge, and then came to a halt. He waited until the "cop" had passed on some distance when he stole after him until within the proper distance for his purpose when he ran forward head lowered and finally making a spring landed head first right on the small of the cop's back. The latter uttered a cry, released his hold upon the girl and fell forward on his face. Bob recovered his feet quickly and said to the girl "Now you get, I'll *entertain* the 'cop'."

As Bob had but recently been entertaining the public, he was full fledged for the entertainment role. The girl sped away, and the "Little Wonder" stood warily awaiting the advance of the policeman, and so divert him from a pursuit of the girl. It was many years afterwards when in a most remarkable manner, a memory of our little hero's feat that night was recalled to his recollection. In the meantime he had cleared his decks for action ; the "cop" regained his feet, but he was evidently in great physical distress ; the blow in the back had come so suddenly and with such force he did not immediately realize what had hit him, but when he saw Bob standing near, a inkling of the truth shot through his mind, and despite his aching back he drew his club and sprang forward ; Bob, however, glided beyond his reach.

and danced away with his "face to the foe." The "cop" didn't use very pleasant language. He was a stout man and no way as nimble as the little pirate who had thumped him in the back. At length, thinking that the girl had gotten away, Bob turned and made off like a deer, and the "cop" did not follow.

A little later and the lad found an old coach on a side street, and as he opened the door he peeped his head in, and in a humorous tone said :

"This is my hotel for the night ; clerk, give me a room, I won't stay to breakfast."

Bob crawled into the old rattle bang vehicle and curling up on the seat soon dropped off into a sleep that many a millionaire would give thousands to enjoy. He was healthy, free from all care, and had all his life before him, although clothed in rags.

Bob was compelled to turn out early and he struck a cheap restaurant where he purchased a roll and a cup of coffee, and as he issued forth he muttered :

"Now, I am ready for the business of the day. He had given up his various former occupations for the time being. He was too restless for a bootblack, and the newsboy's vocation was very arduous, while the profits were small ; and at the very moment when he first met the two variety actors he had resolved to make an effort to strike some legitimate business where he would have a chance to make a future. Bob was very ambitious and enterprising, and withal very smart. He had been an industrious student at the night school, and was well up in reading, spelling and arithmetic. He had also been considerable of a reader ; the Sunday papers had furnished him a wide range of knowledge ; it had been his habit every Sunday afternoon to steal away to some quiet nook out of town on the banks of the Hudson and East rivers, and

there he had poured over all the various general reading available in these great journals.

Our little friend was very sensitive, and specially so when it came to a matter of injustice, and he felt that his treatment by the two variety actors had been contemptible and cruel, and he had brooded over the kicks he had received and was fully resolved, as he put it, to "get square." He said :

"If I didn't get even with those fellows I'd feel a twinge all the rest of my life." He set to work to devise a plan ; he was an inventive little fellow, full of resources and quick to execute. The lad had picked up considerable during his brief career as an actor ; he had beheld the various methods of transformin appearance that the actors were capable of accomplishing and he was still brooding over the matter when he observed a sign.

"Costumes to hire."

He came to dead halt ; his face brightened up with a look of delight and anticipation as he exclaimed :

"By ginger, that's the way I can do it."

The lad entered the place, and said.

"I want to hire a gal's rig."

The man looked him over and demanded :

"What do you want a gal's rig for ?"

Bob was taken aback at first, but his ready wit and recent experience came to his aid and he said :

"I am going to rehearse a gal's part in a play."

"Have you got any money ?"

"I don't expect you to loan it to me for fun."

"Let's see your money."

"Let's see your rig first ; how do I know you can fit me?"

"I can fit you ; what sort of a gal do you desire to impersonate ?"

"A beauty ?"

The man laughed and said :

"You'll have hard work to do that with your 'mug.'"

"It's beauty concealed," said Bob, "adorned and concealed."

"How concealed?"

"Oh, I'll be coy and go veiled."

The man showed the lad several outfits, and when Bob found one he thought would do he said :

"How much for that?"

"You will have to deposit its full value."

There came a very thoughtful look to the lad's face, but finally he said :

"All right."

The man named a price ; a big one of course ; also quite a price for the hire. Again Bob meditated, but finally muttered :

"Revenge is sweet, but it comes expensive," and he added.

"I'll be back for that suit,"

The man was indifferent ; he did not expect to see the lad again, but said :

"All right."

Bob went away and as he strolled along he muttered :

"Shall I or shall I not ; it's a big scheme ; there's lots of fun in it with a little risk ; but after all it costs money."

He pondered for a long time and finally exclaimed ;

"Hang it, I'll be rich some day, and then I will regret I didn't get square; hang me, if I don't have my revenge at any cost."

He went down in his bosom almost to his skin and drew forth a thin little book. He glanced at the figures in one column ; the book was a dime savings bank deposit pass book ; the figures were all on one side; all credit, no debits. He proceeded with a quick step ; almost went on a run, as though he feared he might change his mind ; he reached the bank and drew out fifteen dollars, and his eyes glistened as he clutched the bills, and he said :

"Pennies count when you lay away a heap of 'em ; just to think I just made all this money by quarter and half pennies, the most of it ; but it's all mine and honestly earned."

Bob was a very sensible little fellow with all his humor and love of mischief and adventure, and he was at times very thoughtful, and as he walked off he soliloquized :

"I wonder I'm so honest ; it comes kinder natural to me, I reckon ; mine must have been poor but honest parents, whoever they were ; wish I knew ; but I never will ; but, hang me, I've started out honest and I'm going to stay honest all my life, come what may."

Bob's statement was the truth. He had some hundreds of dollars in the saving bank, and he had earned every dollar of it by selling papers at a quarter and a half cent profit and by blacking boots, running errands, and the like. He was always ready to earn a penny and when he got a penny over a meal he saved it. His lodgings he gained by bargains with imaginary clerks as upon the preceding night when he crowded into the old coach with the humorous inquiry as related.

"I reckon I'm taking a sort of holiday," mused Bob ; and again he added as he felt the fifteen dollars in his pocket, "yes, revenge is sweet, but it comes high."

At about ten o'clock that same night to the surprise of the costumer Bob appeared and demanded the suit. The dealer was curious to know what the lad was up to ; he had recognized that he was a little genius and really didn't care what his purpose might be, honest or dishonest, as he had the full value of his gay hat and dress and other fixings.

"What's your game, lad" he asked.

"I'm going to rehearse a female role."

"So late."

"Yes, I am going to take an hour after the play."

"Do you expect to appear on the stage in future ?"

" Can't tell yet ; I'm going to try a one-act piece with an old actor and I hope I'll act my part well."

The costumer who was an expert, assisted Bob to don the female attire and when robed the lad looked the girl to perfection and as he paraded up and down the room for a little practice, as he put it, the costumer said :

" Oh, you come off."

" What's the matter ?"

" You are no rehearser ; you are an old hand at the business".

Assuming a girl's tone of voice, Bob answered :

" Oh, my! I am only a beginner."

" Who the devil are you, anyhow ?" asked the man, for Bob's imitation of a female voice and his gal's airs were perfect. The whole business had assumed a phase of mystery to the costumer.

" Do you think I'll succeed ?" queried Bob.

" Go long, you're an old hand at the business, and now what are you giving me ?"

" More than your clothes are worth ;" came the ready answer.

" Say, I'm on to you, sonny."

" Are you ?"

" I am."

" Well ?"

" You are some detective's 'kid ;' I see your game, and you'll do it well, you will.

" Thank you," said Bob and he strolled forth ; and as he did so he muttered :

" I'll have my money's worth out of these clothes before I'm through with 'em, you bet ; but *revenge comes high.*"

Bob had a set purpose in his mind as to how he was going to work his revenge. He was, as has been intimated, a sensitive chap, although only a street gamin, a waif who did not know who his parents were ; but as he argued he was a

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human being, and as long as he was honest and behaved himself in his sphere, he was as good as any other man ; he was a human being at least, and no one had a license to kick him around like a vagrant dog.

As he had walked along he muttered :

“ Mister Dick, I never did you any harm, and you thought you had it all your own way when you kicked me ; all right, you’ve had your turn ; mine comes and I don’t let any good chance pass, although my revenge comes high.”

Bob proceeded to the rear of the theatre ; and there he waited. He had prepared himself fully for the expensive revenge which he proposed to enact, and again he muttered :

“ This is a hard world, if little friendless ‘ kids ’ are to be knocked around at the will of every duffer who wears a thick sole on his boot.”

A little time passed and Dick Small and his “ pard ” came forth ; the two men walked along together and Bob muttered ; “ Get apart, you rascals ; I want you one at a time.”

He followed after the two men, and to his delight he saw them separate a few squares from the theatre.

“ Now I am all right,” he muttered, and he drew his veil closely and at a rapid pace sailed around the square, so as to meet his victim face to face, and with high hopes he again soliloquized :

“ This is high daddy jingo, you bet.”

The lad was a wonderful imitator, and he played the role of a young girl to perfection, and soon he came face to face with Dick Small. Dick was a young man who, as is indicated in common parlance, “ traveled on his shape.” He thought himself an Adonis, despite his pug nose, a scar on his cheek, thick lips and only bristles for a head of hair. He was not an amiable fellow even with his friends, neither was he popular owing to his arrogance and self-conceit, and the latter characteristic he possessed to a large degree.

believing that every girl in the audience was "dead gone" on him ; and yet he had never had a genuine proof of a mash from any very high quarter, and when he met a young lady veiled, who from under her mask looked at him closely, he was all puffed up, and turning followed the flitting beauty and she turned to see if he was following ; then she slowed up ; her motive was plainly observable, and Dick felt gay ; he approached her, and addressing her said :

" Good evening."

" Oh, you go a—way."

" Now, don't," said Dick, and he stepped beside the girl, who in a coy manner, said :

" I know who you are."

" Do you now ?"

" Yes, I do."

" Who am I ?"

" I know."

" Come, let's take a walk to the park."

The park was the old Washington Parade Ground.

" I don't want to walk there."

" You don't ?"

" No."

" Why not ?"

" Oh, you want to make love to me and you're dangerous."

" You're a beauty ; were you at the theatre to-night ?"

" Yes, I was ; I am there every night."

" You are ?"

" Yes."

" What takes you there every night ?"

" I go to see you."

" To see me, eh ?"

" Yes, you are so sweet in that act of yours ; you're just lovely."

" Oh, dear, now, how approving you are."

" Well, you do look just lovely."

"Oh, go long, you're giving me taffy."

"I aint ; all the girls are talking about you ; how sweet you look in that white flannel dress suit."

"That's a take off suit."

"I don't care ; you look just lovely."

The two had reached the park and Dick said :

"Let's sit down here."

"No, I can't wait too long."

"Why not ?"

"I'm afraid."

"You're afraid ?"

"Yes."

"What are you afraid of, my pretty dear ?"

"I am afraid of you."

"Afraid of me ?"

"Yes."

"What are you givin' me ?"

"I am afraid."

"Why ?"

"You are so fascinating ; my mother would kill me if she knew I was here, so good night."

"No, come and sit down and we'll talk about the play ; I'll tell you all about it."

"I *must* go."

"Well, you'll let me see your face so I will know you again."

"No, you must not see my face."

"Why not ?"

"I don't want you to know me again ; but you are so sweet."

"Come now give us a peep ; I know you are a beauty."

There was no one near ; and Dick stepped toward the pretended girl as though about to raise her veil. She retreated.

"Come, come," he said, "I am going to see your face."

"No, no."

"Why not?"

"You don't know."

"I don't know."

"And I wont let you know."

"Wont let me know what?"

"Who I am."

"Who are you?"

"Well, you would be surprised if you knew, but I am a foolish girl; I've said too much; I've no business here, anyhow; but I couldn't help it; you are so sweet in that white suit; you look like an Apollo."

"Come, now, tell me who you are?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't do; I live on Fifth avenue."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, my papa is a millionaire; I am an heiress. Oh, just to think of my coming here to meet an actor; but I couldn't help it; I am a little romantic, you know; and you looked so nice on the stage I wanted to see you off the stage, and hear you talk; you speak so sweet when you are talking in the play."

Dick was lifted to the seventh heaven of anticipation and delight. She had been long coming, but his great "mash" had appeared at last, and she resided on Fifth avenue, and her papa was a millionaire, and Dick was unmarried. He had been looking for an heiress. He thought he was entitled to one on his shape and talent.

"Now, see here, I know you," said Dick.

"Oh, no."

"Yes, I do."

He put on a pussy cat tone and became quite pleasant in his voice and manner; "Yes, I know you," he said; "I remember seeing you in the audience, and I could hardly go

on with the play I was so taken with your face, and its haunted me nights—well, it's strange that I should meet you here, and I've been trying to find out who you were."

"But you can't find out."

"Oh, yes, I can."

"No, you can't."

They had both become quite playful in their tones; both were coy and coquettish.

CHAPTER II.

"Come, now," said Dick, "let me see your face?"

"You have seen my face, you said so,"

"But I want to make sure it is the face of my dreams."

"You must guess."

"No, no, I will see your face; yes I will; come now."

He stepped nearer and the seeming girl stepped away.

"Don't retreat."

"Then don't approach me."

"But I'm dead in love with you, I am; I know you now; yes, you are the beautiful girl of my dreams."

There was no one near; revenge came high but Bob though the moment of its gratification was approaching.

"No, I will not let you see my face."

"Will you give me some token?"

"Some token?"

"Yes, that I may remember you."

"And you really want to remember me and think of me when I am absent?"

"I do, yes; yes give me some token, some sweet remembrance so that you will be in my thoughts until I see you again."

Could any one have seen the face under that veil at that moment it would have beaten all the comedies of the world. Bob's eyes were a sight, and his mischievous face a study. The opportunity, the words and all that he had or could have desired was offered him. The man asked him for a token; something to remember him by. "Well, well," was Bob's mental ejaculation, "you shall have a token; you shall have something to remember me by, and it shall be a sweet remembrance, a *bitter*, sweet memory."

"Well, now," said the pretended girl, "I never dreamed you had ever noticed me."

Bob was enjoying the whole affair and he desired to prolong it as long as he could. The more he "guyed" Dick Small, the more bitter sweet would be the remembrance.

"Come now, give, me a token."

"What shall I give you?"

"A kiss."

"How dare you?"

"Yes, give me a kiss."

"No, sir ; you are becoming impertinent."

"But I want something to remember you by ; ~~yes, some~~ real sweet remembrance."

"Are you in earnest?"

"I am."

"You mean it."

"I do."

"And that is all you want."

"Yes, all I want until we meet again."

"And you mean it?"

"I do."

"All you ask is something to remember me by?"

"That is all."

"And you swear to remember?"

"I do."

"Always?"

"Yes, always."

"And forever?"

"Yes, forever."

"Only a little token?"

"Yes."

"A sweet remembrance?"

"Yes."

The moment had arrived ; as Dick uttered the last "yes" he said quickly :

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" You shall have it ;" and the next instant Dick received a cracking rap beside the head, and the yolk of a dozen rotten eggs, rolled down in his eyes, nose and mouth. The man was dazed, bewildered, and Bob chose another reminder and dealt the fellow several blows with a charcoal bag in which wagon grease had been freely mixed, and as he dealt blow after blow, he said :

" Yes, you shall remember ; you'll never forget me, you pug-nosed rascal ; how dare you wink at me in the audience, you bleared-eyed graduate of the Island."

Dick was blind and helpless ; he was completely overcome ; he could not see ; he staggered from right to left ; and Bob kept up the good work, smearing him all over with the greased charcoal until the man looked like an escaped minstrel ; he was a sight indeed, and then Bob said in soft and sweetest tones :

" Will you remember me, sweet love ; will you always remember me, do you swear ; well, good-night, love, you have your sweet remembrance ; good night, good night."

Bob's revenge was complete, and he glided away ; as he did so, he muttered ;

" That conceited, cruel jackass does not suspect who gave him his remembrance, but I am not done with him ; some day he shall know all ; but so much for him for the present, and now for Billy Frank ; he kicked me, too ; well, he shall have a sweet remembrance."

Bob had said he would have a high old time out of his gal's " rig," because it came so high. He was a humorous little " cuss," full of fun and frolic, and a sort of little philosopher ; and it is a remarkable fact that many of these little gamins in New York are of the philosophic order ; and it is not strange ; thrown upon the world as they are at an early age, and meeting with all manner of experiences, they learn a great deal of the darker side of life ; they learn human nature or a phase of human nature that does not

come under the observation of ordinary children ; they become self-reliant and calculative, and if they remain in the straight path—and many of them do—they sometimes rise to eminence, and their early experience becomes of great value to them ; a knowledge of human nature is a power ; and this knowledge in many professions becomes the real power that lifts men to success. Bob possessed in an eminent degree this philosophic turn of mind. He had been thrust upon the world at the age of seven, a little weed to grow wild, and he grew and flourished ; death had passed him over, and a naturally strong constitution had enabled him to skip along in the ups and downs, in remarkably vigorous health. Besides all this, as stated, he was a natural humorist. He was of the mischievous order. His mischievous inclinations did not lead him to do malicious acts, but when it was merely a matter of fun, he was “in it” up to the neck. As has been intimated, he had been a great reader, and besides, possessed an instinctive inclination towards honor and truthfulness.

After the terrible lesson he had given Dick Small he moved away a short distance and stopped to enjoy the punishment he had inflicted which he conscientiously believed had been fully deserved.

At length Bob saw Dick stagger off. The fellow had cleared out his eyes, but he was in a terrible plight. He did not understand how it was he had met with such a dire misfortune. Bob stole up behind a tree and stood long enough to overhear the man's remarks. He heard Dick say :

“ Well, I'll be blowed ! if I don't think that girl from Fifth avenue had it in for me, and she gave it to me good ; hang her, if I had only known her trick, eh ; but I'm in luck ; I'll get cleaned up before I see any of the lads ; but it's a suit of clothes spoiled, that's sure ; and she talking so freely about me white dress suit, eh ; well, dash her buttons ; but she's spoiled this suit, and she has left me a token and sweet

remembrance ; but it's too sweet for me ; ugh, I did get it, and for what ?”

Bob had heard enough. He learned that Dick took the trick well, and concluded that no doubt the man had done mean things enough in his life to realize that some one of them had come home to him.

Our little hero walked away. It was well on toward midnight and he was walking slowly down a side street, lost in meditation, when suddenly he was startled by a yell and something heavy jumped upon his shoulders ; his heart stood still ; his first instantaneous thought was that he had been detected and pursued, and the chances were he would be unmercifully beaten. He was a powerful little fellow, as we have indicated, and very nimble, and feeling some one on his back, like a skittish horse, he reared or rather made an effort to unload ; he adopted just the right method, for so doing he plunged head forward towards the sidewalk and the party on his shoulders went head over heels into the gutter ; Bob regained his feet ; he heard a chorus of laughter, and at the same instant he beheld three young dudes whom at a glance he recognized as out on a lark, and pretty well under the influence of wine. They had mistaken him for a lonely female, and in their wantonness had started in to have some fun. Well, the lad determined that they should have all the fun they desired. He still had the bag of greased charcoal with him, and—well it was just pie to him, the idea of punishing the reckless young, upper ten dudes who would thus insult a frightened and belated female. He did not scream and cry out or attempt to run away. He just set in for an immense time.

There were three of the dudes, and one of them approaching the supposed girl said :

“ You served him right, sis ; yes, you did, but give us a kiss.”

“ Will you young men go away and let me alone ?”

"Lift her veil, Alec," said one.

The fellow who had been tossed into the gutter had regained his feet. He came staggering forward and without ado made an attempt to seize the supposed girl around the waist intending to raise her veil. He said :

"Let's see your face ; you're a daisy, you are.,'

"It was Bob's opportunity, and he was actually agitated with intense delight at the prospect of teaching these young snobs a lesson. Bang went his greased charcoal hitting his assailant square between the eyes. The fellow started back with a yell, while Bob leaped forward and quick as lightning let fly on the other two before they could realize what had happened to their companion; and all three were blinded as Bob put in his destructive work ; he just mussed up their fine clothes, and all the time as they staggered around in confusion to get out of his way he dealt good advice and admonition s well.

"You miserable rats !" he cried ; "so you will molest an unprotected lady, will you ; well, you've made a mistake this time, and when you go home to your Mama she'll have a nice time washing you down for your fun, boys; but assailing lonely females is not fun, and here goes for another.

The three young dudes finally managed to escape, but Bob's adventures were not over for the night, for just as the dudes finally made off, a policeman came sailing down the street. He seized hold our hero. He didn't stop to ask any questions and it isn't strange that Bob had a natural dislike of policemen. They were his "*Bete noir*". They had been his enemies, and had tormented him all his life, simply because he was a homeless little waif. They had chased him as bad boys will a vagrant cat, and as Bob was well armed and on a high horse for the night, anyhow, he just let loose, and without a moment's consideration wrenched himself free and quick as lightning gave the cop a dose of greased charcoal and he gave it to him right in the eyes, so

that it blinded the officer, who drew his club and commenced to beat around wildly, but Bob only gave his man one "swipe" as the boys say and then "skipped."

Believing that his adventures were over he determined to make for the place where he had hired the clothes. He knew the place was open, as many a dress suit had been borrowed and the borrowers wanted their deposit back, and so did Bob. He was on his way when he encountered his third adventure and a very remarkable one. Bob had just remarked that he had never known a little greased charcoal to do so much good in one night, when suddenly a real girl approached him and said :

"Excuse me, sister."

Bob stared; "excuse me, sister," was a queer mode of address, and then a suspicion shot through his mind. He concluded he had run up against the female agent of some benevolent society searching to find and recall poor night wanderers of a great city.

Bob was naturally a good-hearted little fellow, but he was no Sunday-School lad, and knew very little concerning modern religion ; indeed, his religious ideas were a little mixed ; but withal he had respect for anything where the motive was good ; and he determined to be respectful and yet have a little quiet fun.

"Well, sister," he answered, accepting the proposed recognition of relationship.

"I call you, sister, said the stranger, because you are a fellow woman ; I need momentary companionship ; I am in distress."

Bob thought the whole affair queer, and having lived in New York all his life and being up to most of the tricks and devices of metropolitan life, he mentally concluded that the fair sister was coming the distress act on him to play him for a little money, so he was on his guard.

"What's your distress," he asked abruptly; "have you got a headache?"

"Worse."

"Well?"

"I am pursued."

"Pursued, eh, and the 'villain still pursued her,' quoted Bob.

"Yes, he is a villain."

"Eh, I struck it."

"Can I tell you?"

"You can."

The girl like Bob was veiled; at night ladies find it convenient in large cities to go veiled after dark.

"I am an orphan girl; I came from the country and I secured work in a shop; I cannot afford to board out and I live in a room all alone; there is a man who is pursuing me; to-night he came to my room, and I ran out; I have been wandering the streets; I do not know what to do; and I have been so scared; you have a home; will you take me to your home just for to-night, and to-morrow I will change my abode and escape this man."

Inwardly Bob was forced to laugh; the idea of taking the veiled girl to his home; his home was not altogether like Claude Melnotte's, "situated in the midst of orange groves." His homes were too various and hardly inviting enough for even a young lady pursued by a villain, besides the situation was very awkward.

"So a man is pursuing you?"

"He is, and I am terrorized almost to distraction"

"Say, sister, will you let me see your face, just so as to make sure that you are worthy belief."

The girl immediately raised her veil and Bob beheld a truly sweet face, and he saw at once that the poor girl would have a hard time in New York possessing that face and

lacking protection. He only took a moment to consider and said :

“ I will go with you to your home, or if necessary take you to a lodging house ; but first we will go to your home ; you see I cannot take you to my home.”

Bob had a purpose ; he made up his mind that if the pursuer was around he would give him a dose that would last him at least until morning.

The girl was very nervous and bewildered and ready to consent to anything in her present plight. She led the way to her home, which was not far from where Bob had met her. It was, as has been intimated, after midnight. Bob's idea was that the pursuer had gone off about his business and would not show up, but when they arrived near to the great tenement house in which the girl's room was located, the latter seized our hero's arm and in a terrified manner exclaimed in a husky tone :

“ There he is.”

The girl had discovered her tormentor ere he saw her, and Bob was pleased ; on the instant he formed a plan, He drew the the poor girl back and said :

“ Now we will fix him.”

“ What will you do ?”

“ You need have no fear ; go to your room ; enter and wait.”

“ He will follow me, I know he will.”

“ That is just what I want ; it will be his last visit to you ; leave all to me.”

“ Oh, I am afraid ; no, no, I dare not enter my room.”

Bob explained his plan partially and finally the girl consented to go to her room, and after she had gone, Bob watched. He saw the man dodge out of sight and afterwards cross the street and enter the tenement house. The lad's heart bounded with delight, and he muttered :

“ Well, I will get my money's worth out of this ' rig

sure, and I will will teach that old codger a lesson that will last him the rest of his life."

Bob permitted the man to enter the house and then followed. He stole silently up the dark stairway; strangely enough, there had been a boycott on the owner of the premises and that very day the last tenant had moved out; only the girl who had appealed to our peculiar little hero remained, and she had packed up and intended to move also, when she was alarmed by the presence of her persecutor.

As the girl had stated, she was employed in a large manufactory; the man who had become her persecutor was agent for a house that sold materials to the girl's employer. He had seen her once or twice and then had "laid for her," as the vulgarity has it, and one night accosted her; the girl fled from him, but as it appeared, he had later trailed her to her lodgings, and on the night in question had appeared to call on her. The girl by accident discovered his approach, and stole from her room, leaving the door unlocked. She stood in the dark passageway when the man knocked and later she saw him enter her room, and it was while he was in her apartment she stole down the stairs to the street. It was evident the man had learned the house was deserted and knew that the poor orphan girl was in that great building alone.

All the above facts Bob had learned from the girl while on the way to her lodgings, and consequently he was "dead set" for a great punishment.

In explaining his plan to the girl our hero had told her to let the man enter the room, see what his purpose was, delicately hinting that he meant robbery. The girl, as we have stated, reluctantly consented and so the game went on.

The man reached the top floor where the girl's room was located. He stood a moment at the door, and then knocked; as he received no answer to his summons, he boldly entered, when the girl rising from her seat demanded:

"What do you want here?"

"Do not be frightened," said the man.

"You have no right to come here; go away, sir, at once."

"My poor child, listen to me; you have excited my sympathy; I have seen you at the factory where you work and I feel great pity for you; my pity has really deepened into love, and I come here to offer you a grand home, diamonds and carriages and fine dresses and all."

The girl had not the strength of character and the courage to carry out the plan as our hero had suggested; her terror overcame her, and she was about to scream and possibly would have gone into hysterics, when Bob who had overheard enough for his purpose, entered the room.

The man stared at the entrance of female number two, and he wilted when in a stern tone Bob demanded;

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

The man did not reply. He betrayed at once that he was a cowardly cur, and again Bob demanded

"What do you want here?"

"Oh, I—I—called on this young lady."

"Did she invite you to call?"

"Ye—es, or well—well, I—"

The girl at once proclaimed, "I do not know the man; he has no right here."

"He has no right here?" repeated Bob.

"I do not know the man."

Bob had not removed his veil, but in tones almost tragic, he exclaimed:

"And you dared enter this room uninvited, you miserable wretch; well, I am glad to find you here; yes, I am; do you know me?"

"Your face is concealed; of course I cannot tell whether I know you or not."

"Yes, my face is veiled, and do you know why?"

Bob's manner was very threatening, especially to a cowardly villain.

"I don't know," faltered the man.

"I'll tell you ; I am the old 'witch of Manhattan' ; I am the protector of friendless girls ; the torment of wretches like you ; I go prepared ; I am armed to the teeth."

"I will retire," said the man, turning quite ghastly in his terror.

It will be remembered that a boy of fourteen even when a little undersized can make quite a formidable looking woman, and Bob as he uttered each sentence would rise on tip-toe, and as his dress hid his feet, he presented quite an imposing appearance.

"You will go, eh?"

"Yes, I will go at once ; I'll fly."

"Will you?"

"At once."

The man moved toward the door, and Bob said in really dramatic tones :

"Wretch, do you think I am going to let you off that way ; no, no, I am well acquainted with you ; I know you well I delight in the recognition ; I will punish you here, and —" Bob stopped short, and then with tigerish glee, added, "your trusting spouse shall finish the job."

The man uttered a cry and made a dash for the door, but he was not quick enough ; the old charcoal bag was brought into the play, and down it came on the head of the rascal, and off went his wig ; bang, bang played the greased charcoal until the man was utterly unrecognizable ; Bob piled on the grease, and the man yelled for mercy, and the girl to whose rescue our hero had come was compelled to laugh, such a comical sight was presented ; her fears had vanished ; she saw the man vanquished, and she did appear to accept as truth the declaration that her protectress was veritably the old witch of Manhattan.

The man was not very strong physically and his frantic efforts to escape from Bob exhausted all his little strength, and finally he just threw himself into a chair, and blinded and bruised, covered his head to take his punishment, then Bob desisted, and in a matter of fact tone said :

“ Now you, villain, you can go.”

The man had just sufficient strength to stagger from the room ; Bob kicked his hat after him, and in a jeering tone cried out :

“ When next you go visiting young ladies after midnight take your wife with you ; good night.”

After the man had gone Bob turned to the girl he had defended and asked :

“ Do you feel safe now ?”

“ Oh, certainly, and are you really the witch of Manhattan ?”

“ Did you ever hear of me ?”

“ No, but I heard you tell that man you were the witch.”

“ It does not matter who I am ; tell me about yourself, my child ; talk to me just as you would to your own mother.”

It was indeed quite ludicrous for a mere lad of fifteen rigged out as a female to thus address the young girl, but our readers will remember that Bob owing to the way he had been compelled to knock around, had gained the experience of a man or woman of thirty and few men or women of the age mentioned knew more of life than did this homeless boy.

“ There is little to tell about myself.”

“ I want to know about.”

“ I was born up in the country. I do not know who my parents are ; I was educated in an orphan asylum, and when I reached the age of thirteen I was put out to hire with a farmer ; the people did not treat me well, and after I had

lived with them a year I ran away and came on here to New York."

"How long have you been in New York?"

"About eight months."

"And you are not sixteen yet?"

"I am not quite fifteen."

"And how have you gotten along since you have lived in New York?"

"Very nicely until within the last week: another girl who had lived in the asylum, and who had been put out to service, like myself, she ran off with me. We came here here together and roomed here very nicely; but about a week ago she disappeared and I have been alone."

"Where did she go?"

"I do not know."

"Do you suspect?"

The girl did not answer.

"What is your name?" asked Bob.

"My name is Mary Vernon."

"And you are an orphan?"

"Yes."

"And you do not know anything about your parentage?"

"No."

"I asked you if you suspected what had become of your late roommate; tell me."

"I think she has deserted me."

"Do you suspect her reason for deserting you?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"She wanted me to become a chorus girl with her, but I wouldn't think of it, and I believe she has gone on the stage."

"Did she not tell you?"

"No, she merely disappeared."

"She wanted you to go on the stage?"

"Yes."

"What made her wish you to go on with her?"

She blushed and said :

"They say I've got a very good voice."

"And you are an orphan?"

"I am."

"And you do not know anything about your parents?"

"No."

Bob meditated a long time and then he said :

"You will not be frightened if I make a very strange revelation to you?"

The girl's pretty blue eyes opened wide.

"A revelation," she repeated.

"Yes, a revelation ; first let me tell you I am an orphan, and I do not know who my parents were ; I've kicked around the city here, and sort of growed up like a weed."

—Bob was not always strictly grammatical in his sentences.

—"Yes," he continued, "I've just growed up and I am going to tell you all about myself ; but now don't get scared."

"Why should I get scared?"

"Don't jump and scream."

"Why should I?"

"Becsuse I've got something terrible to tell you ; yes, something terrible."

The girl began to tremble, and her eyes opened wide in wonderment.

"You have something terrible to tell me," she again repeated.

"Yes."

"Tell me."

"You won't scream?"

"No."

"Nor be frightened?"

"I'll try not to."

"There is no need that you should, because I will tell

you the whole story in the end ; you and I are both friendless and homeless ; there is something that draws us together ; I will be your barricade ; do you understand ? I will stand between you and future peril ; I've got a scheme ; you and I will go into partnership ; you see we start on the same capital, both orphans, both waifs ; you need a friend and I'll be your friend ; only this, when you called me sister to-night you should have said *brother*."

The girl gazed in amazement. She did not speak ; it was evident the announcement had stricken her speechless for the time being.

" Now don't be scared," said Bob, " it's all right ; we're both orphans ; we've both had a hard pull ; we've come together sort of queerly, you see, but we'll pull together ; I tell you I've got a great scheme."

The girl still gazed in speechless amazement.

" Come, say something," said Bob ; I am not a man ; I am only a lad."

" I thought you were a young lady."

" You did ?"

" Yes."

The girl had found her voice, and Bob said :

" I didn't act much like a young lady when I was thrashing that wretch around this room a bit ago."

" I thought it rather strange."

" I should say so."

" And you are a man ?"

" Not yet ; I am only a boy."

" You look so tall."

" Do I ; well, now listen ; I am going to tell you all about it."

CHAPTER III.

Bob had promised to tell his story and he did so ; he told the girl Mary Vernon all about himself and explained how it was she saw him in a " gal's rig " as he still designated his transform. The girl listened to Bob's remarkable narrative with dilating eyes and when he had concluded she innocently asked :

" And is all that the truth ?"

" Yes."

" Every word of it ?"

" Sure."

" Well, you are a very remarkable boy."

" Do you doubt my being a boy ?"

" No."

" Then I tell you ; I've got a scheme ; you and I will go into partnership."

The girl colored all up. Bob noticed her confusion and said :

" Oh, bother, don't misunderstand me ; I don't mean we'll get married."

" Oh, certainly not ; I know you did not mean anything as foolish as that."

Bob laughed, and said :

" Well some folks find it foolish, I reckon ; but, no, I've really got a great scheme ; you are my sister now remember that ; why hang it, who knows mebbe you are my sister ; neither of us know our parents ; do we look alike ?"

" I can't tell," said the girl ; " you haven't let me see your face yet."

" By jiminie, that's true, said Bob.

It is a fact ; Bob had thrashed the man about the room and gone the whole series of incidents as we have related

through without once having removed his veil, but upon being reminded by the girl he tore the veil aside and his merry mischievous face was revealed.

"I don't think we look alike ; no, we are not brother and sister," said Mary in a matter of fact sort of way.

"Well there's nothing to prevent our swearing to be brother and sister to each other, is there ?"

"I'll think about it," said the girl.

"Yes, we'll talk it over."

"Of course we will."

"And you intend to move from here to-morrow ?"

"Yes."

"You need not fear that old wretch any more ; he dreads the old witch of Manhattan ; but there are other fellows like that old rascal hovering around ; they are thicker than mice in a cupboard ; still it's better for you to move, but I've got an idea."

"What is your idea ?"

"I wont tell you now. I'll come here to-morrow and tell you all about it. You will not be afraid to stay here alone, cause if you are I'll just bunk in one of the empty rooms along side ; but hang it, I've got this gal's ' rig,' and I want to get rid of it, and receive my money back."

"Can't you go and get your clothes back, and then come and stay in the next room ?"

"I can beat that. I'll stay there until daylight ; then I'll go away, and come back and talk matters over."

"I go to work at seven o'clock."

"That's all right ; I'll be back here before seven."

"I'll get a half day off in order to move."

"Have you found a place yet ?"

"Yes, I am going to take a room with the mother of one of the girls who works in the shop ?"

"That's a good scheme ; well, I will meet you here to-morrow at one o'clock, and help you move."

"You are very kind."

"I'll try and be kind," said Bob : and he added, "Now, good night ; you will need your sleep, and don't fear, for I will be right here and I've got my old grease avenger handy, and if any robbers come around they will not need a mask. I'll make negro minstrels of them in no time.

Bob left the room and strange thoughts were running through his mind ; there had come a revelation to him. All his life he had had no one to care for but himself. He had never come under the gentler influences. He had been like a fox and a wild hare always on the alert for a job or a nibble. He felt quite proud at the responsibility so suddenly thrust upon him ; the idea of his being the protector and counsellor of a really pretty and graceful girl, and besides there was a great similarity in their two careers ; both were waifs, both were orphans, and both were fighting the great battle of life unaided.

As Bob stretched out on the bare floor in the adjoining room, he muttered :

"She is real pretty ; I wish she were my sister ; but hang it, I'll adopt her, yes, I will, and I've made a discovery ; I went on the stage with those two duffers, Small and Frank, and made a hit, why can't I start in on my own account ; I can ; I am good, I know it, and I've picked up the points ; there's no reason why I can't pick up a job and then, well, by jingo, I hardly dare think of it, I might pull down ten dollars a week, and be a millionaire."

With the first streak of day Bob was alert. He went down to the costumers and as good luck could have it he found the place open. The man had an appointment and had arrived with the dawn. He was surprised to see Bob, and handed him a less amount than had been agreed upon.

"What does this mean?" demanded our hero.

"I hired the clothes to you for one evening, not for a week."

There was no use for the lad to kick. The man had his money and all he could do was to take what the fellow chose to give him in return.

Bob had been thinking very intensely. He had long been maturing a plan and he determined to carry it out at once ; indeed, it was in this direction, he had resigned his vocation as newsboy and bootblack.

" I reckon I'll start right in," he said, " and I'll just lay around and make another visit to that bank. It's for this I saved me money and the hour has come."

The little wonder had a fresh incentive. Unbeknown to himself a certain new sentiment had grown up in his heart. He did not recognize the new force that was to inspire his future course in life, but he did feel an ambition much stronger than had ever before animated him. He did lay around until the bank opened and then proceeded straight in and drew some additional money. The bank teller who had long known Bob and had recognized his saving qualities said :

" I trust, my lad, you are not going to squander all your savings after having nursed them so well?"

" No, sir, I am not."

" What are you going to do ?"

" Add to them."

" How ?"

" Can't tell yet, but I am going to work out a scheme. I'm getting old enough now to do something more than black boots or sell newspapers."

" Have you secured a position ?"

" Do you think I'm a politician ?"

" No."

" Then you must know I haven't secured a position ; no, sir, I am going to *work* for a living."

The teller smiled ; the little philosophic street gamin had presented a very trite distinction.

FUNNY BOB.

Bob got his money and started out to buy some clothes, and not feeling at liberty to go to a large place, he went down to Catharine street to see how he could make out with the purchase of a second hand suit. It happened to be Saturday, and he entered a place and tried on a coat; the Hebrew who attended him proved to be quite a character, and he commenced to extol his goods, and Bob always up to a joke said :

" Say, Mister, you are a Hebrew ?"

" Yes, I vos a Hebrew, mine son."

" This is Saturday."

" Yes, dot vos vat you peoples call Saturday."

" Your Sabbath ?"

" Ya—as dat vos mine Sabbath."

" And you are breaking the commandment."

" Eh, I vos break the commandment ?"

" Yes."

" How, mine son ?"

" When you sell goods on Sunday."

There came a very peculiar gleam in the Hebrew's eyes as he said :

" Mine son, ven I lets you haf dot coat for dree dollars dot vos not selling it. *Dot vos charity.*"

Bob enjoyed the joke on himself, and bought the coat. He managed to rig himself out quite nicely on a very small outlay. He bought a shirt, collar, socks, cravat, cuffs and shoes, and then went to a barber shop where he was well acquainted. He had often done little odd jobs for the man who had the place. He got his hair cut, and was permitted to take a bath, and then he rigged himself up; when he came forth there had occurred a most wonderful transformation. Bob wasn't what might be called a handsome boy, but he did not possess bad features. He had fine eyes, nice brown hair, and was healthy and vigorous, and upon the whole, looked quite presentable and not at all like the little

street gamin whom we first introduced to our readers in the Bowery.

He had surveyed himself in the large mirror and felt quite proud, and the barber asked :

"What's up, Bob?"

"Well, I don't know ; I reckon I'm up, yes, sir, up too high."

"How so?"

"I guess I've lost my wits to get into all this finery."

"You look fine, Bob."

"Thank you, but it costs money to look fine."

"I didn't believe you were such a good looking chap."

"Thank you again ; but I don't understand it myself ; I kinder feel as a hog would were its hide transformed into the silky feathers of a bird."

The barber laughed, and asked :

"You've got a scheme, Bob, eh ; what is it?"

Bob's eyes twinkled as he asked :

"Don't you tumble?"

"No."

The lad assumed a very sober tone and manner as he said :

"I am going to get married."

The barber roared with laughter and Bob joined him and finally the barber asked :

"Is it true, Bob?"

"Well, I'll tell you, sure I am getting older."

"Yes."

"I've got something to do a little above boot blacking and selling newspapers."

"Boot blacking and selling newspapers is an honest business, Bob."

"I know that, yes, sir, and we lads earn every cent we make ; yes, we work hard for it that's square ; and I am not above it and I'll never deny I was a boot black if I become President of the United States. I've read history.

sure I have, and I remember that Henry Clay was the mill boy of the Slashes ; Andy Johnson was a tailor's devil ; James A. Garfield was a tow boy on the canal ; no, no, I'll never go back on me old trade ; But Clay didn't stick to the mill, Johnson didn't stick to the bench and Garfield left the canal."

" Bob, you're a genius, you are ; you'll be something some day."

" Do you think so ?"

" Yes, I do, honest."

" I'll never be any more than I'm entitled to."

" And what are you entitled to ?"

" I don't know yet ; I haven't found out ; I am going to try and do so, old man."

At one o'clock Bob was on hand at the lodgings of the girl, Mary Vernon. He found her busy in her room and she greeted him very cordially ; she was trusting and unsuspecting ; she was quick and observant, however, and recognized Bob in an instant by the tone of his voice.

" I am here," said our hero.

The girl appeared to be quite pleased to discover that Bob was such a fairly nice looking lad and she said :

" You don't look like a boy who had slept under the wharfs all his life."

" That's where I've slept most of the time when on my summer vacation ; yes, the river front has been my summer resort every season and in the winter I smuggled in grocery wagons and old coal boxes and the like.

" But there are lodging houses."

" I know it, but I'm queer."

" You're queer ?"

" Yes, I aint much company myself, but I like good company. I've a liking for fresh air ; never could take to rooms redolent with beery breaths and tobacco. I am not

a dude, but my lungs go against anything but pure air ; but now where is your expressman ?”

“ I expect him.”

“ Say I’ve a favor to ask.”

The girl did not speak.

“ You and I are orphans ; we’ve had an experience, sort of the same kind, and I want you to adopt me.”

“ Adopt you ?”

“ Yes, adopt me as your brother and I’ll be true to you and protect you every time,”

The girl laughed merrily, and said :

“ All right you shall be my brother.”

“ And I want you to give me something.”

“ The girl colored. She was not a fool. Bob noticed the blush, and said :

“ You’re richer than I am.”

“ Do you want money ?”

“ No.”

“ Then how am I richer than you ?”

“ You have a name ; I haven’t ; I am a nameless Bob.”

“ And what can I give you ?”

“ You adopt me as your brother ; that’s agreed.”

“ Yes.”

“ Then give me your name ; let me be Bob Vernon.”

The girl smiled, and said :

“ I can’t prevent you taking that name.”

“ No, but you can consent.”

“ I consent.”

“ All right, now I am Bob Vernon. Hang me if that isn’t a fortune in a day. I’ve got now what I never had before a name. Say, sister, did you ever realize what it was to be so poor that one didn’t even have a name ? I’ve been as poor as that, and yet I’ve been cheerful and hopeful ; I shall pull out in the end I reckon.”

“ You will, Bob.”

Mary although a waif in one sense had been brought up under different auspices than our hero. In the asylum she had received care and teaching, and during the time she had been in the farmer's home she had also met with training. She knew something of the usual incidents of home life. Bob on the other hand knew absolutely nothing. He had been a wild weed indeed, and she was sincere when she said :

" You will, Bob ?"

She realized that such courage, good nature, industry and perseverance must win in the end.

" What do you propose to do, Bob ?"

" I am going to try and get a job as an actor ; a variety actor."

The girl made no comment, and a little later the expressman arrived ; Bob aided in helping Mary to carry down her few things, and rode with the expressman to the house ; they arrived ahead of Mary ; our hero assisted in taking the things up to the girl's room, and he was delighted to learn how nicely she would be situated. He met the woman who hired the room to Mary, and his knowledge of human nature aided him to conclude that she was a good, honest woman. A little later and Mary arrived, and Bob was introduced, at his own suggestion, as a cousin, and in urging the little deception he had said, " Mebbe we are cousins, who knows ?"

Bob had such an honest face and straight-forward manner, the woman did not question the relationship, and it was understood that the boy was to call as often as he saw fit.

Our hero felt sort of blank when he departed and found himself alone and without occupation. He was walking along and finally drifted to the vicinity of a variety show. He was standing in front of the billboards looking over the various attractions offered, when a man came up to him and asked :

" Hello, how is business down to your house ?"

It was lucky that Bob was quick and keen-witted. He got on to the man's meaning at once. He knew that the man had been down to the show where he had appeared with Dick Small and Billy Frank, and he was also observant to determine that the man who had addressed him was connected with the house before which he was standing, and he answered quickly :

" I ain't down there anymore ; I've pulled out."

" How's that ?"

" I quarrelled with me 'pals.' "

" Where are you engaged now ?"

" I'm on the town."

" You are ?"

" Yes."

" Come into the office, will you ?"

Bob followed the man into the office and there learned that the man who had addressed him was the proprietor of the rival establishment.

" Do you do a single act," asked the man.

Bob was sort of bewildered; he had been kicked and cuffed around all his life, chased by " cops" a sort of dock rat, was actually being treated like a man and a brother, like a human being. The lad was naturally very frank and open but he was a business chap as well. He was bright enough to see that it was a time to " play off," as the saying goes, he did not mean to give himself dead away and he answered :

" I just started in with those fellows. I've never done a single act, but I guess I can."

" I'd like to have you come with me."

" I haven't got a piece ready."

" You can get up an act."

" I reckon I can."

" Do so, and come down here and let me see you rehearse."

" I might get up a song and dance."

"That's what I want."

"You heard me sing?"

"Yes, I was down to the other theatre."

"You've seen me dance?"

"Yes."

"Will I do?"

"I think you will."

Like many little gamins Bob was a good imitator. He had a good lad's voice and could sing pretty well; and as a dancer, well, he had picked up about every step that was ever touched to a stage floor before an audience. Besides he was well aware that he was an impromptu rhymester. It came sort of natural to him to make rhymes, and he could get a good deal of good sense into them too; also he was very quick in taking a suggestion; even while talking to the manager he had hit upon a subject and he asked:

"If I suit you what will you pay?"

"How much do you want?"

"Name what you give and I'll try and fix meself to your price."

"If you will come down here and rehearse a good piece, I'll agree to give you ten dollars for the first week; if you make a hit with my audience I'll make it fifteen and a four month's engagement."

"You mean that square?"

"Yes, I do."

"I'll accept your terms and be down here Monday morning and rehearse."

"All right, I'll expect you."

As Bob walked out of that office in feeling he was the most important, luckiest lad in New York. His long experience around theatres in the gallery—for he had been a persistent gallery god—enabled him to carry through the interview as described. He had felt that he was going to be a success and determined to do the one thing that had been

the day dream of his life. He bought a trunk ; then he went to a place on which he had long had his eyes and hopes fixed, a house where they hired out furnished rooms. He bought quite a few things for his trunk and then visited, as stated, the lodging house and at a very low figure engaged a furnished hall room on the top floor ; but it was a room, a real *live* furnished room, as he called it, and after his trunk had arrived and he was fully initiated, no king in his palace chamber was happier ; then he threw himself on the bed, a poor one, but luxurious to a lad who had never slept upon a real bed more than a dozen times in his life, and it was *his* bed. He rose and poised before the little looking glass and finally exclaimed ;

“ I am a gentleman at least.”

It had always been the boy's ambition to be a gentleman and this instinct may have been born in him ; it was possible that his father had been a gentleman. It was possible his mother had been a lady ; strange incidents have happened and are happening every day in this great busy world.

Bob had laid in a stock of writing paper, pens and ink. He was to be an actor and the creator of his own acts. He felt competent to write his own little monologues, and having had a good meal and feeling first rate, he sat down to write his first song and dance.

Our readers will remember that the teller in the bank had asked Bob if he had secured a “ position,” The lad had answered, “ do you think I am a politician ; no, no, I *work* for a living.” He had learned that sentiment of a local character ; was very popular with the general public, and he wrote as follows :

BOB'S SONG.

I'm no great shakes, as you can see,
 But I want you all to list to me,
 I've no 'posish' under a boss,
 “ But I works for a livin', just like a boss.”

—SPEAKS.—

“ My friends, the good book says, ‘ the things of this world pass away ; ’ so does a ‘ posish ’ under a change of administration. One boss is on deck to-day, another to-morrow, and then the lad in ‘ posish ’ goes walking around. But the man who *works* for a living is a fixture. The Democrat or Republican who holds a ‘ posish ’ may go any day travelling on his ‘ uppers,’ according to which boss has the ‘ pull ; ’ but the working man stands on deck in the storm that washes the ‘ posish ’ chaps all overboard, and there’s where we come in with our

—DANCES.—

“ The lad who cries the Herald and News,
May earn his bread without any shoes,
But the ax ain’t swinging o’er his head,
And what he eats is the workman’s bread.”

—SPOKEN.—

“ There’s where it comes in. The lad who holds a ‘ posish ’ is always trembling in his boots. The ax may fall at any moment and send him traveling for spoons, but the working man *sees* no ax in the air ; the man who lives by the sweat of his brow sees no ghosts in the gleam of the street, and without fear or favor he can gaily

—DANCE.—

“ I honor the man who earns his own bread,
For of that man it can never be said :
He’s bound to do the will of his ‘ nib,’
Or lose his feed from the public crib.”

—SPOKEN.—

“ And there again is where it comes in the workingman has no master ; he don’t have the best in the world, but to him it tastes sweeter because it’s the product of his own brain and muscle and that’s why he can

DANCE.

Bob got off about six verses of doggerel as above. It was not necessary to pay any attention to metre. He was to sing his own song and could make the music accord with the verses and words, and after all it is not alone in the words, but the manner of emphasizing that makes the success of all similar doggerel ; this applies also to the monologue between each verse. Bob held a little private rehears-

al and that evening strolled out to take a walk about town. As a man of the town there had come a complete change over him. He was like a vagrant dog whom some good person might take off the street and clean and feed. He had been kicked and cuffed, as we have related, but now, well, in his own estimation, he was quite somebody. Sunday followed, and the lad just stayed in the house in his room and enjoyed his comfort, comforts such as he had never enjoyed before.

On Monday morning down he went to the theatre. The manager introduced Bob to his stage manager. The latter was an indifferent sort of man, and when an opportunity came gave Bob his chance. The lad didn't exert himself to his best save in his dancing. He just ran through his rehearsal and later the manager, with rather indifferent air said :

“ We'll give you a chance and see what you do to-night.”

Night came and in due time Bob appeared on the stage. He wasn't at all nervous. His previous career had not been such as to serve the cultivation of nerves. On the contrary, he was as if inspired by the general glamour, and he just sailed right in, and the whole house came down to him in roars of applause. The lad extemporized under the inspiration when called back by an encore, and he just excelled himself. When he finally left the stage the manager met him at the side, and shaking his hand in a pleasant manner said :

“ It's all right ; I guess you've got 'em.”

Bob was delighted, and as he returned to his room that night he muttered :

“ Well, what a night will bring forth.”

Bob played on to the end of the week, and his success was pretty well assured. He was cute enough to change his verses and add to them, and each evening he gave the audience something new. At the Saturday matinee an event occurred which recalled several very unpleasant

recollections ; he heard a hiss after his first verse. He knew it had been uttered to disconcert him, and looking in the direction from whence it came, he recognized Billy Frank. Bob had just sang the following verse to an encore :

“ I'm just a little tiny tot, hi oh,
Of this world's goods not much I've got, hi oh,
But I'm ringy and I'm springy, hi oh,
When I snap the heel and touch the toe, hi oh, hi oh !”

When Bob left the stage the mean insult he had received from Billy Frank dwelt on his mind, and he said :

“ In my good luck I'd about made up my mind to forgive that villain, but he's rubbed it in on me, and now I am going for him.”

Bob did not have to appear at rehearsals but twice a week, as his was a single act part, and he had plenty of time to himself. He passed the first week and received his pay, fifteen dollars ; at last it was a reality. He was on the high road to fame, and being assured of an income he determined to invest in quite a good outfit ; and one day while lying in his bed there came to him a certain resolution. He remembered the neighborhood where he had lived with the old woman until that morning when she thrust him forth. He remembered how terrified he was, and how he scampered off, and how he ever after for some strange reason, avoided that part of the city ; but he had a vivid recollection of the old woman, and believed he would identify her were he to meet her. He concluded she was dead, but there was a possibility that she was still living. Heretofore he had not cared to make any inquiries about himself, but now that such a change had come over his prospects in life he did experienced a desire to learn something concerning himself and he determined to go down and seek to learn more as to what had been the after fate of his old mama, for he remembered calling her by that endearing name.

One afternoon, he determined to make the excursion ; he

had little difficulty in finding the old house, but he did not remember the name of the old woman. He had only known her as mama, and in after years remembered when he came to learn what certain conditions meant that she must have been under the influence most of the time. He found the very house, as intimated, without difficulty, and he had been standing before the place less than three minutes when lo he beheld and recognized his old mama. There she was fat, red-faced but vigorous, and evidently as capable of doing a day's wash or drinking a pot of beer with as much ease as on the day eight or nine previously with terrible oaths she had driven the terrified little pale-faced child from her room to the street.

Bob was really agitated when he beheld the old woman who had changed so little despite her mode of life. In fact, he was so excited and such strange feelings came over him he was compelled to walk away and calm himself down. He had resolved to speak to her and make inquiries, but he had not prepared himself for the interview. He was not in fact prepared to find her alive, and when he did, for the moment the discovery was overwhelming. There came to him a grave suspicion; it was possible that the woman was his mother; indeed, he entered a barroom and looked at his face in a glass to see if there was any resemblance, and it was with a feeling of comfort, he ejaculated:

"I don't look like her, that is certain."

After some time he determined to pay the visit and a trembling heart entered the old woman's presence.

CHAPTER IV

Bob did not know the old woman's name and before entering her squalid rooms he inquired, and upon confronting her said :

" Well, Mrs. McQueen, don't you remember me ?"

The woman was very cunning, and always ready to make a point, or we might better say a *pint* of beer. She looked her visitor over and answered :

" I don't know ye, eh ?"

She saw that he was well dressed and evidently had the price of a ' pint ' in his clothes.

" No, you do not remember me ?"

" Now, look here, I don't remimber ye, eh ; well, I'd niver forgit ye."

Bob was amazed and exclaimed :

" And you really remember me ?"

" Well, now, to think that I wouldn't remimber ye ; could I ever forgit ye ; no, no, my dear boy ; I remimber ye well, and weren't yer father born in the same town as meself in ould Ireland ?"

Bob's heart thumped. The old lady not only remembered him, but remembered his father. He was not a waif after all, but would learn all about his parents. He was a Brady or Briody, sure.

" And you remember me of a certainty ?"

" Ave coorse I do, and yer mother dear ; shure didn't yer mother and I play together when we were girls."

Well, well ! Bob was rising to the seventh heaven of delight. He had both a father and a mother, and had met one who knew them both, and here he was on the high road to fame and success and born of poor but honest parents.

" My father is dead of course," said Bob.

There came a peculiar perplexed look to the old woman's face.

"Is he dead now," she asked hesitatingly. Well, well, poor man, when did he die, and your mother, your dear, good mother, how is she these days; dear me, and your father is dead; well, me heart's broken; would ye mind sindin for a pot o'beer; shure I'm very nervous?"

It was Bob's turn to wear a perplexed look and being a quick-witted lad he began to suspect that the old woman was fooling him and had mistaken him for another, and he said:

"I fear you mistake me for some one else."

"Do I now; no, no, but its overcome I am, sind for the beer till I control meself; and I'd not heerd of yer father's death; dear me, poor man; sind for the beer."

Bob thought it best to send for the beer and he borrowed a tin pail from Mrs McQueen and went for liquor, and when he returned he said:

"Now tell me all about my father and mother."

"Shure, it's many years since I saw them, me boy."

"What was my father's name; come let's see if you haven't made a mistake."

"Dear me, but I forgit his name, now, so I do."

"Look here Mrs. McQueen, you have made a mistake I am sure."

"Ye are?"

"I am."

"Well, who are ye thin?"

The old woman was taking a short way out of it. She had had her "sup" and was not as particular as she had been.

"Look sharp at me."

The woman did look sharp and finally with a twinkle in her eye said:

"Well, it's possible I did make a mistake; shure I tak

ye for O'Brien's son, the man who kept the place at the corner there."

Bob's hopes all fled ; his heart sank within him. He had believed he was on the eve of a great revelation as concerned himself and suddenly fell to the lowest depths of disappointment. He fell back to the position of a waif and unknown, a nobody. He was assured that the old woman was an old fraud, and so believing, he made up his mind to worm the truth out of her.

"Mrs. McQueen," he said, "I want you to go back a few years in your memory."

"Faith, me mimory is failing fast."

"Do you remember back eight or nine years?"

"I may ; yes, I may."

"You had a little pet then?"

"Did I now, what was it ; a dog shure ; whin I wer' a young girl I wer' very fond of doggies, so I wer'."

"You had a little boy you cared for very tenderly."

"Did I now?"

"Don't you remember little Bob, the little six year old child you cared for?"

"Oh, is it little Bobbie, yer asking about?"

"Yes."

"And are you me dear little Bobbie?" the woman rose to her feet and made a movement as though about to clasp her poor dear little Bobbie in her arms, but our hero leaped back and motioned her to keep off, with the declaration :

"No, I am not little Bobbie, your dear little Bobbie, but he was a friend of mine,"

"He was?"

"Yes."

Bob had concluded that it would be better to "play off", believing he could get more information by pretending to be some one else.

"And ye are not me dear little Bobbie?"

FUNNY BOB.

"No."

"And ye know him?"

"I did know him."

"Ye did know him?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, and where is he?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"No, I've not heard of him since he ran away from me many years ago, lavin' me wid a bleedin' heart. Shure I've niver got over me loss and it led me to the love of beer for consolation, so it did, the loss of me dear little Bobbie."

To use a vulgarism, Bob "tumbled" to the old woman's game. She was on the make and playing around to learn the best tack to take in order to make her little Bobbie, her dear little Bobbie, or his memory a profit to her."

"I want to know all about your dear little Bobbie."

The woman drew herself up and assumed quite an important air as she asked :

"And who are you?"

"It does not matter who I am. I want to know all about your dear little Bobbie."

"And why should I tell you about him?"

"I may make it an object to you?"

"What's that yer sayin'?"

"I may make it an object?"

"Will yer now?"

"I may."

"Well, what have ye to say?"

"You remember the little boy?"

"I do."

"What was his real name?"

"And do you suppose I'd be tellin' ye the real name of that dear little gentleman?"

"Then he was not your own child?"

"What is that to you if he wer' or not?"

" You just spoke of him as a little *gentleman* ?"

" Did I ?"

" You did."

" Well ?"

" If he was a little gentleman of *course* he could not be *your* son."

" See here, hev ye come to insult me ?"

" No."

" Thin what do yer mane ?"

" Oh, ' come off,' old woman."

" No, but it's you will go off pretty soon if ye don't stop your impertinence."

Bob pulled out a two dollar bill and the old woman's eyes glistened.

" Do you see that ?"

" Do ? well do ye mind, I hev plenty o'thim in the bank."

" You can add this to your bank account."

" I can now ?"

" Yes."

" Well let me hev it."

" Not until you earn it."

" And what can I do to earn it ?"

" Tell me the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

" And what do you want to know ?"

" I want to know all about little Bobbie."

" You do ?"

" I do."

" And your two dollars ?"

" That's all the money I have to spare ; it's all I can or will give."

" And ye want to know about Bobbie ?"

" I do."

" And where is the lad ?"

" He's gone forever."

“It’s dead he is, eh ; well, well, and he’s so young.”

“I’ll make it three dollars.”

“Will ye now ?”

“I will.”

“Make it four.”

“And if I do ?”

“I’ll be square wid ye.”

“You will ?”

“I will.”

“I’ll make it four.”

“And ye want to know all about Bobbie ?”

“Yes.”

“That is, all I know ?”

“Yes.”

“Is he in jail : has he committed a crime ?”

“No.”

“Has his father found him or his mother ?”

“Do you want the four dollars ?”

“I do.”

“Then tell me all you know.”

“And what do you know ?”

“I’ll be frank with you ; I know nothing.”

“Ye know nothing ?”

“Nothing.”

“Well, that’s my case ; I know nothing.”

“Where did you first get him ?”

“What’s that to you ?”

“It’s four dollars to *you*.”

“Is it now ?”

“It is.”

“Well, he came to me.”

“That will not do.”

“Wont it ?”

“No.”

"And ye will give me the four dollars if I tell ye the truth?"

"I will."

"Well, now, I got him from a nursery."

"You did? How old was he when you got him?"

"Less than a year old."

"And why did you take a child to support?"

"Faith it was he supported me."

"Explain, will you?"

"Oh, I tuk him to play mother wid him, and the pennies came in fast to me."

"You took him from the nursery to beg with him, eh?"

"Yes."

"Did you find out anything about him when you took him from the nursery?"

"I did not."

"You didn't get his pedigree?"

"I did not."

"You learned his name?"

"I did."

"And what was his name?"

"Bobbie."

"His last name?"

"That's all the name they ever gave me."

"And that's all you know about him?"

"It is, shure."

Bob believed the woman told the truth. He had gratified his curiosity, but at a fearful cost, for with the information he had obtained there went out all hope of ever discovering who his real parents were. The lad had always indulged a hope that some day when he got "a good start," as he put it, he would be able to learn something; but, alas, that hope had fled forever. He handed the old woman the four dollars.

"Thank ye," she said. She was an Irish woman, and at the bottom really good-hearted, and she asked :

"Are you me dear little Bobbie?"

Our hero hesitated. He did not know whether or not it would be wise to tell the old creature who he was. She might fasten on her dear Bobbie and become a nuisance and yet it recurred to him that after all this poor bloated, ill-favored old "hag" was the only mother he had ever known or ever would know.

"I thought you would recognize me," he said.

"And ye are me Bobbie, me dear little Bobbie; well, well, how me sin has come home to me."

"Your sin!" ejaculated Bob.

The woman had drunk the contents of the pail of beer, and had lost her cunning."

"Yes, me sin."

"And what was your sin?"

"That I drove ye forth afther takin' care of ye from the time ye wer' a wee baby."

"And why did you drive me forth?"

"And will ye forgive me?"

"I will, certainly."

"Faith, it's evident I drove ye up a peg, for ye are looking as fine as a fiddle, and hed ye stayed here wid me, no good would ever hev come of it, that's sure. I remember a man in Ireland who was kicked out of a cabin when a boy and became a great merchant, and he always said he wer' kicked into prosperity."

"But tell me why you turned me out?"

"Well, it wer' a bit o'vanity caused me to do it."

"Vanity!"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Well, ye see, I wer' a widdie, and there wer' a man lookin' strate at me. and I thought he might pop the question, do

yer see ; only he believed I had an encumbrance ; faith, he didn't want to take care of another man's child ; that is what I thought, and I turned ye adrift : but I paid the penalty, so I did."

" You paid the penalty ?"

" I did. "

" How ?"

" Faith, the man did pop and from that time out me independence wer' gone and me life became a burden ; shure the man lay drunk on me hands all the time. He niver earned a cint, and many a day I wished me Bobbie back in exchange for the wretch I had taken in his place."

" And you turned me out so you could get married ?"

" I did."

" Do you remember the nursery from which you took me?"

" It wer' some where in Philadelphia."

" Not in New York ?"

" No."

" Well good day, Mrs. McQueen ; I will come and see you again some day."

" And when can I come and see you me dear boy ?"

" I'll send you word."

Bob was glad to get away ; he at last gave up all hope of ever solving the mystery of his parentage ; indeed, he concluded that the discovery might prove more of a disappointment than a gratification ; and he resolved to forget all the past and devote all his energy to the future.

Owing to the fact that Mary Vernon was at work in the day time and he at night, he had seen her but briefly upon one occasion since the eventful night upon which he had made her acquaintance. On the Sunday following his interview with old Mrs. McQueen he called to see Mary Vernon and invited her to take a work. The girl evidently was pleased to be in our hero's society. He was a bright, vivacious chap, full of fun, always saying bright things and al-

ways very entertaining. When dressed in her Sunday clothes Mary looked very fine. She was indeed a very pretty girl and quite smart and bright, and like Bob very companionable. The two strolled over to the river bank and sitting down on a rustic seat enjoyed the beauties of the day. Finally Bob said :

“ You’ve never heard about your friend that ran away to go on the stage ?”

“ No, I’ve never heard from her.”

“ She wanted you to become a chorus girl ?”

“ Yes.”

“ But you wouldn’t have it ?”

“ No.”

“ Why not ?”

“ I don’t know.”

“ Do you despise actors ?”

“ No, you are an actor, now,” replied the girl in a frank, innocent way.

“ But you wouldn’t like to go on the stage, would you ?”

“ I don’t know.”

“ You said you had a good voice.”

“ I didn’t say so.”

“ I thought you did.”

“ I told you that some people said I had a good voice.”

“ Oh, I see,” drawled Bob.

“ Mebbe I have.”

“ You can sing ?”

“ A little.”

“ I’ve never heard you sing.”

“ No ?”

“ I’d like to hear you.”

“ Not here.”

“ No, but I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll go out in a boat and then you can sing for me.”

“ I don’t care.”

Bob secured the boat and they rowed out in the stream, and then suddenly Mary, without waiting to be asked, burst out into a merry song. Bob was amazed and delighted ; indeed for a child she had a remarkable voice, and he exclaimed :

“ We can't lose that.”

“ What do you mean ?”

“ That voice must not go to weed ; no, no, it must be cultivated.”

“ Who'll pay for its cultivation, I'd like to know ?”

“ Your brother,” came the answer.

“ I wont hear of it.”

“ Yes, you will ; why, my dear sister, it will be a good investment, a big one, if you would only get over your prejudice ”

“ Get over my prejudice ?”

“ Yes ”

“ What prejudice ?”

“ Your prejudice against going on the stage.”

“ I've never had a chance.”

“ There's lots of money in it, and people who think that variety actors are all bad people make a great mistake. These people earn their money by hard work and honestly, and when they behave themselves are entitled to as much respect as any one else.”

“ I wouldn't mind going on the stage if I knew how ; I tell you it couldn't be harder work than I go through every day, as it is.”

“ We'll talk it over ; we can arrange for you to receive instructions ; I'll make inquiries ; we could go on together ; I'll make our double acts, and we can make a big hit, and get big money, and some day buy a farm, and take life easy ; yes, you and me, two orphans, two waifs.”

Bob had a delightful day, and Mary also appeared to enjoy their excursion.”

Our hero had just left the girl at her home, and was proceeding along the street lost in deep thought, when suddenly he received a blow on the side of the head that made his ears ring, and sent him toppling into the gutter ; he was on his feet in an instant and managed to jump away just in time to avoid a terrible kick, and he at the same instant recognized his assailant ; it was the man Billy Frank ; the fellow appeared to have conceived a great hatred for the little actor.

Bob did not stop to argue matters at that moment or fight back ; Billy Frank was a powerful fellow ; indeed a regular pugilist, and a man of the most violent temper.

Bob succeeded in getting away, and as he walked off he muttered :

“ Now it's time for me to fix that fellow and I will.”

On the following Monday night Bob got away from the theatre in pretty good season ; there had been a change around, and he went at a comparatively early hour ; he knew that Billy Frank did not get away from his place until late ; Bob had revolved a dozen different plans in his mind for getting square ; he had at length hit upon one which he determined to carry out ; in fact he arranged half a dozen tricks ; he intended to make it a regular persecution ; all he thought of was revenge ; he had not yet been under those influences which teach us to return good for evil ; with him it was an “ eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth ” ; that was the school he had been raised in, and from which he had just graduated ; he had been all his life on the defensive against all manner of abuse and mean attacks. He got around to the theatre where Billy Frank performed ; he had armed himself with with what the boys call a putty blower ; he made his own pattern, and it was one of the most ingenious tormentors ever invented. He carried it up his sleeve, the opening extended down his arm and he could lift a little aim to his lips and give a blow, and drop the mouthpiece of the curious apparatus, out of sight ; indeed, one would have to

be "on to it," as the boys say, to detect it and work this little instrument of torture. He worked and practiced, and he improved until he could send a ball of putty with the same force that it would have when shot out of an air gun. He just laughed all over in anticipation of the contortions he would compel Billy Frank to go through.

"That man has abused me without provocation or excuse," he muttered, and finally he got his contrivance down so it worked to perfection. He had gone around to the theatre, as stated, and selected a *coigne de vantage*, and determined upon the following night to get off in good season and have his fun and his revenge.

On the night when Bob was to get off his revenge, he was a little off in his performance and he pleaded illness to avoid an encore, and getting into his street clothes as quickly as possible he turned around to the rival establishment, and managed to gain the spot he had selected, from whence he proposed to work his torture. He was a good actor off the stage and did nothing to attract attention towards himself, but "lay low," and watched. Soon his men came on the stage. He raised his arm as though stretching to gain muscular relief, when bang went his pellet, and his first shot proved a good one; it took Billy Frank right in the ear. The man at the moment was turned sideways, and thus got the putty ker-bang. He thought he was shot, gave a yell, and fell to the floor. He did it so naturally and well, the audience supposed it was a part of the play. His partner, Dick Small, knew better. He thought his "pal" had been struck with the horrors. Thought he "saw things," and was filled with consternation, and he too acted so naturally the audience just yelled with delight, and Bob, seeing the effect of his shot, muttered:

"Hang it, I am helping the scamp along."

Dick Small went to his comrade and raised him up, and in a whisper asked:

"What is the matter?"

"I am shot" was the answer.

"Go away, what's the matter with you, man."

"Am I bleeding?"

"Bleeding! no, you're crazy."

"I felt a bullet hit me square on the ear; it's gone clean into me head."

"Go along, man, what's the matter with you?"

The audience had ceased to applaud and were gazing with impatience and curiosity: the people had awakened to the fact that something not on the bill had occurred.

Billy Frank put his finger in his ear and finding no blood nor the putty, for the latter had dropped out, observed:

"Nothing's the matter with you, old man, and we'll be "guyed" in a minute."

"Billy recovered his composure and resumed his part while Bob fired two or three shots, which went wide of the mark; finally, however, he landed one straight on Billy's nose; it was but a little pellet, and glanced off and wasn't observed; but the victim felt the sting, and he stopped short and with an agonized look upon his face whispered to Small:

"I got it again"

"Got what?"

"A clip on me nose."

"Go away, man; what *is* the matter with you?"

"Again the play had been interrupted and Small was trying to urge his friend to proceed when suddenly he got a clip on the cheek and with a yell of fright he sprung into the air and then fell over on his back yelling, "I'm shot, "I'm shot."

The audience began to think the men were introducing a new act and they didn't like it, and there was one hiss heard, and Billy Frank lifting his partner to his feet, said:

"Here don't be making a fool of me, or when the act is over I'll mash you."

Small had recovered from his surprise, and both attempted to resume their parts when, bang bang—both got it, one in the eye the other in the mouth, and the one who got it in the mouth caught the putty pellet in his teeth and held it, and then he tumbled to the truth and he whispered to his partner:

“ We’re getting it wid’ putty balls.”

“ Bang, bang came two more well aimed pellets, and by this time the audience had conceived an inkling of the truth. Those in the front seats in fact perceived the truth, and there was a general laugh of derision, and both men retired blushing and cursing from the stage. Another act was immediately run on and the two men explained to the manager what had occurred and word was sent to the officer in gallery, while Frank and Small put on their regular attire and also ascended to the gallery with blood in their eyes.

Bob had anticipated what would follow and as the two men retired he slid out from the theatre, and once on the street he just guffawed to his heart’s content.

Meantime the officer and the two actors were flying around the gallery, but they made no discovery, and finally gave it up as a bad job.

A little later and Small with his ‘ pal ’ were in a nearby drinking place ; they sat down at a table and Frank said :

“ It was a dead set on us, Dick.”

“ It was, and who ever did it made a baby show of us.”

“ He did.”

“ And what will we do ?”

“ What will we do ?”

“ That’s what I am asking ?”

“ We’ll murder him who ever it is.”

“ That all right, but who is it ?”

“ We’ll find out.”

“ We will.”

“ Yes.”

“ How ?”

" He'll do it again, he did it so well."

" He will, but have you any idea or suspicion as to working this on us."

" I have not."

" And how will we find out ?"

" I'll spend a hundred dollars to find out, and then—well, where will be a murder committed."

" It's a rival."

" You bet."

" And who can it be ?"

" If we only knew."

It was arranged that on the following night they would have the watcher and bouncer in the gallery on the lookout. Billy said :

" A fellow can't work a putty blower of that power without being seen and I'll offer ten dollars reward."

" It was arranged that on the following night there should be two on the lookout in the gallery, and Bob, knowing he might be discovered, determined to patronize his friend the costumer once more.

Bob on the following day got his gals " rig " once more, and to guard against accidents fixed a greased charcoal bag also, and he remarked :

" No one can tell ; those fellows are no fools ; they may get onto me, and then they will make me ' hustle ' ; I'll just be ready for 'em."

On the following night, as had been arranged, the bouncer was on the alert and another man also was on the watch. Bob got off in good season for his second night's adventure, got into his gal's " rig," and in due season was on hand and secured his old place. He was fully half an hour ahead of the time of the appearance of the two men whom he proposed to torment. At length they came on the stage and instinctively glanced up towards the gallery at every convenient interval, and that gave Bob a fairer shot,

FUNNY BOB.

and he took advantage of his opportunity, and bang, he shot a pellet ; it missed its mark, but it warned the two men that their tormentor was at work and it completely disconcerted them. An interval followed, and they made up their minds that the tormentor had been captured, and he was to be held for revenge, whoever he was ; but, alas, they were mistaken ; bang, went a pellet and Billy Frank got it on tip of the ear. In his rage he ran down to the foot-lights and shook his fist at a man whom he suspected had fired the putty. There was a different audience present of course, but there were some of the people on hand who had been present on the previous night, and they falling to the situation, set up the old "guy," and shouts of derision sounded through the place. The two men were actually driven from the stage, and both as speedily as possible made for the gallery ; but in the meantime Bob had risen to depart, and singularly enough the bouncer had a suspicion. He made a move to stop the gal ; it was in the corridor, just outside the door from the gallery. He made a move to seize the supposed gal, as stated, when he received a full charge of the greased bag in the face, and while surprised and staggered, he received several blows until he was completely blinded, and then Bob glided down the stairs and succeeded in getting to the street just before Billy and Dick came around the front in order to ascend to the gallery. Up they went like two raging hounds and at the head of the stairs in the corridor they beheld and heard the bouncer. He was staggering around having just succeeded in getting his eyes clear, and the language that fell from his lips was something terrible to listen to.

"Did you catch him?" demanded Billy Frank, breathlessly.

"Did I," sputtered the man ; "no, but I've caught it."

Variety actors enjoy fun as much as their audiences, and seeing the bouncer's plight and hearing his answer, the

men both laughed despite the dramatic incidents attending the scene.

"You didn't catch him?"

"It wasn't a *him* ; it was a *her*," came the answer.

"What do you mean?"

Between volleys of oaths the bouncer managed to say :

"It's a gal whose giving it to *yous* fellers."

"A gal!"

"It's a gal, sure."

"And what did you get?"

"Don't you see ; I am ready to go on the stage in black ; I'm greased with burnt cork, blast her eyes."

Dick Small had never told of his experience, but he bitterly recalled it as he gazed upon the besmeared bouncer.

"And was it really a gal?"

"It was, and a nimble one, too."

"Did you see her with the blower?"

"Did I, you bet I didn't ; I saw *her* and didn't see *nothing*."

CHAPTER V.

Dick and Billy were pretty badly "broke up," as the boys say ; it was bad news when they learned that it was a woman on them who was proving a Nemesis, and both ran o'er their past lives to recall what particular deed of wickedness was thus coming home to them. Remembering his own previous experience, which was his own secret, and wishing to shirk all responsibility, Dick Small said :

"What have you been doing, Billy ?"

"What do you mean ?"

"It's a woman on your track ?"

"A woman on my track ?"

"Yes."

"How about you ?"

"Oh, I am only a fellow sufferer ; with my case it is the innocent suffering for the guilty."

"It was you she went for, old man."

"It was for me she went ?"

"Yes."

"You're way off, old man, way off ; wasn't it you who got it in the ear first?"

"And wasn't it you who got it in the mouth next ?"

"It was a chance shot ; I caught every dig that was intended for you."

"How do you know ?"

"I know."

"You do ?"

"I do."

"You're a liar," came the charge.

Billy Frank, as has been intimated, was of a quarrelsome disposition ; a man always ready for a row, and Dick Small thought well of himself also, and he didn't fancy being called a liar.

" You don't mean that, Billy ?"

" I mean it."

" And you call me a liar ?"

" If you say the pellets were aimed for me you are a liar."

" You were hit."

" So were you."

" I tell you it was a chance shot when I got it, and you know it."

" I don't know it."

" You were hit three or four times."

" So were "—

" You lie."

Dick Small had returned the lie. Billy Frank was not the man to argue when called a liar. With him it was a word and a blow, and the charge had hardly passed Dick's lips when Billy's fist landed just where the vile epithet had issued. Dick hit back, and a regular rough and tumble followed ; both men were game, both athletic and mad ; and like two bull-dogs they tore at each other, and it was a long time before outsiders succeeded in separating them, and when the separation was made, a second separation was on the carpet for Dick Small from between his bleeding lips said :

" I've had enough of you ; do you hear ? you and I are out ?"

Dick was really the attraction and Billy Frank without him was a nobody in the profession and the break was fatal for the time being to the latter.

On the day following Bob heard of the result of his scheme and knowing the men and their mean dispositions he felt no regret.

A year passed ; our little hero kept right along in the trade ; he behaved himself and resolved to become one of those recent examples in the business, an actor who can behave himself and be a gentleman off the stage. We say recent, simply because in former times there were

few actors who were not pretty wild and careless, spending all they could earn, while wasting their strength in dissipation; of late years, however, there has come a great change over a large proportion of the profession, and there are many rollicking variety actors who appear as ne'er do wells on the stage who are *quiet, domestic* heads of families. Bob had worked up to twenty dollars a week; in fact he received the advance at the expiration of his first engagement of four months; and then one Sunday he invited Mary out to walk and during their walk he said:

"Mary, I've been thinking."

"You're always thinking, brother Bob."

"I've been thinking something good, real good."

"A penny for your thoughts."

"I'll charge you nothing, sister, for you were the object of my thoughts."

We will here state that Bob had made great progress in the higher social scale and was quite a gentleman in his way. It had been his ambition always to be a gentleman some day and he was getting there at a great rate.

"So you have been thinking about me?"

"Yes."

"That is very kind."

"I always think kindly of you, Sis; indeed, I love you as a sister."

"And I love you as a brother, Bob."

"I know you do."

"And now what were you thinking of?"

"You have a splendid voice, Mary."

"Do you think so?"

"I do, and with proper training you will make a great singer."

"Where will I get the training, Bob?"

"That's what I'm coming at; I'm getting twenty dollars

a week now ; I want you to leave your shop and devote your time to the study of music."

" At your expense ?"

" No, at your own."

" My money that I've saved wouldn't last me a month."

" I told you that some day you would be a great singer ; you will make heaps of money and you can pay me back ; I am only a variety actor, just good in one or two points. I can rise just so high and no higher ; I will never become a Booth or a McCready, but you may become a Jenny Lind or a Patti ; you've got the voice and I believe the talent."

" I can't let you spend all your earnings on me."

" See here, Sis, I am making a good investment ; that's all. An investment in your voice, and in the end it will pay. I insist upon it."

We will not dwell further on what followed at that moment. Bob finally prevailed and Mary agreed to take lessons at Bob's expense ; but, as she said, " only to aid him in his investment."

The arrangements were all completed later, and so another year passed. Bob was nearly eighteen, and Mary seventeen. She was growing to be a really beautiful young lady. She had always been pretty and ; as stated, as she grew in years she developed into a beauty. Like Bob she was ambitious and strove hard.

At the end of the second year Bob received an offer to go on the road with a traveling company at forty dollars a week, and as it was for the summer months, it came in just nice for him, as heretofore he had lost over two months out of each year.

The lad was away three months and during that time it was his delight to correspond with his sister, and he received delightful letters from her in return. These letters were always headed " dear brother " and " dear sister," and so the third year passed, making three years and a half that

these two waifs had sort of pulled together, and it was shortly after Bob's return from his trip on the road that they were taking their usual Sunday walk, when Mary said .

" Bob, I've news for you."

" Good enough."

" I've held it back for a while."

" So as to give it to me altogether, eh ?"

" Yes."

" Let's have it all in a lump."

" Signer Finelli says I can go on the stage now and make money."

" He said so, eh ?" Well, that was his privilege."

" You are glad of course ?"

" Certainly, I am glad, and I'll tell you why and how pretty soon ; but what more did he say ?"

" He is to have a manager to listen to my voice."

" He is ?"

" Yes."

" When ?"

" Some day next week."

" Mary, my dear sister, I am glad you are able to go on the stage but you are not going all the same."

" What do you mean, brother Bob ?"

" Just what I say ; your voice is my investment."

" That's true."

" You are to consult me."

" That is what I am doing now."

" And yet you were going to let this duffer of a manager hear your voice."

" Not until you consented."

" Then you didn't consent ?"

" No."

" What did you say ?"

" I said I'd ask my brother."

" You're a good girl, Mary, a good true girl and ~~dit~~

right ; now just listen to me ; I know the world pretty well and I know values, and your voice is not going to be peddled out in any cheap place. I've got other ideas."

"What other plans have you, Bob ?"

"You wont get scared ?"

With a flushed face and gleaming eyes Mary exclaimed

"I remember when you first said that to me."

"That is when I told you I had a revelation to make?"

"Yes."

"Well, as I said, I've got other plans."

"What are your plans ?"

"You are to be a great, great singer."

"Not a great, great grandmother, Bob."

"No, a great, great singer."

"It would take years of study, but I've studied long enough to find out."

"Have you found it out, Mary ?"

"Yes I have."

"Then you've made a great step in the right direction, and your confirming my decision ; I intend to have you go to Italy."

"What !" ejaculated the girl turning pale.

"That's what I said ; and it's what I mean too."

"You mean me to go to Italy ?"

"Yes."

"What for ?"

"To study."

"Bob, you're crazy."

"Am I ?"

"You are, brother."

"I'm not, sister."

"How can you send me to Italy ?"

"I'll go with you."

"You'll go with me !"

"You bet I will."

"How can you?"

"I've made an engagement for London; I'm told my act will be quite novel over there, and that I can make big money; I will send you on to Italy, and I will stay in London and make the expenses."

"Bob, you are doing too much."

"Am I?"

"You are."

"I'll do it all the same, much or little."

"When?"

"When I get ready, that's all."

"And how about the manager?"

"You just tell Finelli when you want to go on the stage you'll call on him."

"And you do not want me to rehearse?"

"No."

"You want me to drop the whole thing?"

"Yes."

"I am disappointed, Bob."

"Are you?"

"I am."

"Well?"

"I don't like to see you working and denying yourself and giving all the money to me."

"You like to see me happy?"

"Yes, I do, Bob."

"Very happy?"

"Yes."

"Then let me alone."

"But you are spending all your money, denying yourself in every direction."

"Am I?"

"I know you are, Bob."

"How do you know?"

"I've known it all along."

" You have ?"

" Yes."

" And you want to see me happy ?"

" Yes, I do."

" Then Mary, there is nothing does or can give me greater happiness than to save my money, and spend it on your musical education; it's my delight, it's my incentive; it's what keeps the "go" in me; I am amply paid in the present even though you should prove a failure."

" I'll not prove a failure, Bob."

" How do you know ?"

" I've got a voice."

" Yes."

" Well, in the face of your good news and enthusiasm I'll have the industry and I'll work and study night and day."

" Good enough, sister, and now stick to Finelli another year, and then we will go to Italy; you will have two years of it there, and then the little orphan girl of Central New York will become the great prima donna of the age, and I, the little nameless waif of New York will become your great manager. I think you can trust me, Mary."

" Bob, there is nothing on this earth that I control that I wouldn't trust to you."

" Do you mean it ?"

" I do, Bob."

" Remember those words, Mary; when you are a great lady and surrounded by flatterers; I'll remind you of what you just said."

" No need, Bob, for these are my sentiments, and they will ever animate me."

Bob changed the subject. He was a sensible fellow and not going to mar her prospects as an artist by expressing his sentiments just at that moment.

At length the day arrived when Bob and Mary were to start for Europe. They engaged passage on the great

steamer *Servia* and as they went aboard few people would have suspected that the robust looking young man accompanied by the fine young lady clad in a neat plain travelling suit of navy blue, were two waifs, one an ex-bootblack and newsboy, and the other a girl who had been put out from an orphan asylum as hired girl to work on a farm and who later became a New York factory girl. They were entered on the ship's list as Robert and Mary Vernon, and it was accepted as a matter of fact that they were brother and sister. On the passage over they kept to themselves and appeared to be very affectionate in that relation.

When nearing the other side the usual concert was arranged, and a lady who had overheard Mary warbling one night when she and Bob thought no one was near, came to her and asked her to sing.

With a laugh, Mary said :

" Ask my brother."

Bob was taken a little aback. It was natural timidity and a knowledge of their humble origin that had caused them to keep by themselves, but our hero still retained as a young man the quick wit that distinguished him as a little gamin in New York, and he said :

" We will think it over."

When the two were alone, Mary asked :

" What do you think of it, Bob ?"

" That's it ; I've been thinking."

" Let me see, you have never given an exhibition of your voice in public ?"

" Never."

" I am a partial witness and your teacher may have flattered you for a scholar and the pay."

" That is true, Bob ; I've often thought of that."

" Would you like the test ?"

" Frankly, I would."

" Have you the nerve and self-possession ?"

" I will only think of you, brother Bob, and the sacrifices you have made for me."

" You can say nice things when you wish, Mary."

" I always want to say nice things to you, Bob."

" Oh, come off, you'll spoil me."

" Shall I sing?"

" Yes."

On the following morning Mary announced to the lady her willingness to sing, and that same evening following, the concert was to take place.

" Do you want to rehearse, Mary?" asked Bob.

" No."

" Oh, I see, you want to take them by storm."

" We are always liable to storms at sea, Bob."

" Hold on there, sister; that's variety business."

" Excuse me, Bob; you may get a chance to *toss* in the joke."

" I will, when we get on the other side."

The concert proceeded and finally the moment arrived when Mary had to sing. She walked modestly to the piano and Bob who had a natural gift for music, like many variety men, and who had taken a few lessons, was to act as her accompanist; as there had been a sort of exclusiveness about the two and because of the fact of their good looks also, there was a dead silence broken by the first notes on the piano, and the next instant the people sat entranced as the rich, clear, sympathetic voice of Mary, the waif, filled the cabin, and when her song was concluded—for she had selected a simple song, indeed, there followed a sudden storm at sea, a perfect hurricane of applause; and the encore continued until the fair singer responded and a second time charmed the audience. For the balance of that eventful evening, eventful to the two waifs, she was the subject of conversation and also of marked attention.

When Bob and Mary were alone, with their faces beaming with delight and happiness, Bob said :

“ I knew.”

“ Knew what, Bob ?”

“ That you would rank among the greatest prima donnas of the age, and you will, my sister.”

On the day following the concert the two waifs received a great deal of attention and there came many requests for Mary to sing, but the girl gently declined. Bob had an eye to business and he did not wish Mary to become common property. Singing was to become her business for pay. He was ambitious to make money. He had a day dream. He had indulged it all his life and he hoped some day his dream would be realized.

In due time the ship arrived at Liverpool and Bob and Mary after locating at a quite little hotel started out for a stroll.

We will here state that our hero always registered as Robert Vernon and sister.

They remained a few days in London, and then started for Milan where Mary was to go under instructions. Bob secured for her a boarding place in a house kept by an American woman, and where a great many Americans stopped, and reluctantly he returned to London ; he had been in the great metropolis but a few days, when one morning he stood on Westminster's Bridge looking at a new boat that had just appeared upon the Thames ; he was still gazing, when an enthusiastic Englishman who recognized him as an American, said :

“ That is a great steamer.”

“ Yes,” answered Bob with a drawl.

“ You haven't any steamboats like that on your American rivers ?”

“ No,” answered Bob quickly “ *not on our canals either.*”

The Englishman didn't tumble, as the boys say, but any man who has been in London will appreciate Bob's severe

joke ; on a latter occasion Bob was in an American banking house where quite a number of Americans were gathered ; among them a Boston man who had been very much impressed or pretended to be with what he saw in London. It was during the time that Charley Backus, the famous American Minstrel, was making his first and only visit abroad ; the Boston man was trying to hammer into Backus the declared fact that everything was better in London than it was in New York, especially the food. The argument had been called forth by a remark made by one of the party when invited to dinner, and he replied :

“ Are you joking, *a dinner in England ?* ”

This remark aggravated the Boston man, who as stated, commenced to dilate on the supreme excellence of English food, and in his enthusiasm, he turned to our hero and asked :

“ Don't you find the living better here in England than at home ? ”

Quick as a flash Bob answered :

“ Don't ask me ; I had the *average American fare at home.* ”

Bob was continuously getting off sharp answers as above, and was merely trying to prove that he was Funny Bob the world over.

The night at length arrived when Bob was to have his opening. He had grown to be a singularly powerful young man and was really quite a good looking fellow, refined and gentlemanly in his appearance, although only a graduate from the streets of New York, and when he was twitted of the fact by a fellow who had learned his history, he quickly answered, “ You now know what a good education the streets of New York can give a poor boy. *The streets of New York never graduate a fool.* ”

“ As intimated, Bob had graduated into a powerful young man. He was a good athlete and a splendid boxer. He had learned that the latter accomplishment was quite

necessary as a protection against slights and insults in his profession.

His "opening" proved a success, and he received an engagement at good pay. He became a "star" from the start, as he put it in a letter to his sister Mary. One day he was at one of the pleasure resorts down the Thames, when suddenly he came face to face with Billy Frank, his old-time enemy. Billy had heard of Bob's success on the stage and had always nursed a hatred towards our young hero. He stopped and said :

"Hello, Bob."

"Hello," answered Bob.

"You recognize me?"

"Yes."

"I am the man who first introduced you on the stage."

"Yes, and you are the same fellow who kicked me off the stage when I was a friendless boy."

"When you were a boy?"

"Yes."

"You're a man now?"

"I'm getting that way."

"And I kicked you as a boy?"

"Yes, but I got square."

"For the first time it flashed through Billy Frank's mind that Bob was the fellow who worked the putty blower on him and all his old-time rage and anger was aroused.

"You got square with me, eh?"

"Yes, I did," answered Bob, with an aggravating laugh.

"You worked the putty blower, mebbe?"

"Yes, and I have been looking forward to the hour when I could tell you that."

"You have?"

"Yes, I have."

"You worked the greased bag, too?"

"Yes, I did."

"And you're proud to tell me?"

"Yes, I am."

"I've been looking for the fellow who worked that putty blower."

"Well, you've found out now; let's call it square; without meaning it you did me a good turn."

"I did, eh?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"When you introduced me on the stage; and I'll forgive you for kicking me off."

"You will forgive me, eh?"

"Yes, I will; let's shake and call it square."

"Yes, I'll shake on it, and call it square; I kicked you as a boy."

"You did."

"I am going to kick you as a man."

"See here, Billy Frank, don't you try it."

"You think you're *some*, now days."

"I don't want to quarrel."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Well, you just bet; I'm going to warm you I am."

Billy Frank was in an ugly mood. He had on the instant resolved to beat and mar Bob so as to prevent his appearance in his part. He was a hateful man any way.

Bob did not fear Billy Frank, nor did he wish to quarrel with him, but he made up his mind that although Frank was a noted pugilist, he would not permit him to get away with him easily as the fellow appeared to think he could.

"Say, Billy, don't let us quarrel."

"Why, you dirty little ex-ragamuffin, I'll teach you to put on airs with me."

Billy made a lunge at Bob; the latter, however, was on guard and avoided the blow. Frank followed it up until

Bob's patience was exhausted and he watched for an opening and dealt the great Billy Frank a blow that laid him toes up on the grass. Frank rose to his feet as furious as a mad bull and he made a rush and closed in with Bob. The latter downed him again, throwing him with perfect ease. Frank was a heavy drinker while Bob did not drink at all, and besides he was young and vigorous and the result was he gave Billy a first-class drubbing and came out of the encounter without a scratch. When the melee was over and as he walked away, he said :

" Billy I've paid you the grudges I owed you, and now if I can be of any good service to you for the one good service you did me, command me. Good-day, Billy ; bye, bye."

Bob moved away not a little pleased after all in having met and warmed his old foe.

A year passed, and Bob hadn't been able to go to Milan and see Mary. He had been careful and economical, however, and had sent his sister money right along and they had corresponded as brother and sister might correspond.

At the end of a year Bob got a vacation and went to Italy, and he spent one month there, having a very delightful time. At the expiration of his vacation he returned to London and another year passed, when one day Bob received a letter, that Mary had been offered an opening in the great Opera House, La Scala, one of the most famed music halls in the world, on whose stage all the famous prima donnas had appeared in times past. Bob was delighted. It did appear as though the dream of his life was about to be realized, and he determined to close up his engagement in order to be present at the first appearance of his sister.

He arrived in Milan and Mary appeared delighted. She and Bob talked over old times. They recurred to that night when Mary first addressed Bob as sister under the mistake occasioned by his disguise in the girl's " rig" which

same high. They talked over all their early hopes and fears and then of the prospect of their coming triumph, for it appeared to be a mutual affair between them.

The night of the "opening" arrived and all Milan was talking of the new prima donna. The opera house was jammed; it was one of La Scala's great nights, one of her musically historic nights. Bob was in the lobby. He had picked up considerable Italian. He had studied the language because he knew Mary would become an Italian linguist naturally, and he was quite proud of his accomplishment when he started to converse with his sister in that language. Mary, also, was proud and delighted, and she appeared to fully appreciate the compliment.

The first scene had passed. The second scene was to introduce the great singer. She appeared on the stage and there was a dead silence. Italian audiences do not applaud in advance. One must earn applause in La Scala. Bob stood at the rear, his heart in his mouth. But after the first note of Mary's clear, full, rich, powerful voice floated through that great auditorium, all fear fled and all agitation. He could see that Mary wasn't at all embarrassed. Her nerve and self-possession was born of her consciousness of power. She had studied hard and she possessed the voice; and she, practically another graduate of the streets of New York, faced that immense audience without a tremor.

The aria closed. She had won her applause, and she received an ovation. Old La Scala's walls had never echoed a more tumultuous roar of approval and delight.

Bob was overcome with delight. Tears glistened in his eyes. It seemed like a dream. There a great foreign audience of critics were going mad over a New York shop girl, a girl whom he had literally snatched from a tenement house, while he himself was still a homeless waif.

Bob walked out to the corridor and was standing lost in pleasant memories when he heard voices near him. They

were talking of the debutante. He was anxious to drink in all that was said concerning her and he listened ; but an instant later anguish filled his soul. He received a cut straight through the heart. He fell from the delights of a heaven to the torments of hell. He heard a little dark-faced looking Italian ask :

“ Well, what do you think of her, my little American song bird ?”

The man spoke in Italian, but Bob clearly understood every word.

“ She is a great singer.”

“ And she is mine,” said the first speaker.

“ Yours ?”

“ Yes, mine ; she will become the Countess Falvi ; she is an American. The great European families are delighted to marry into these American families ; yes she is mine, mine.”

“ But she has a brother here ; do you know him ?”

“ I have not had the pleasure to meet him, but I will welcome him as a brother.”

“ These Americans like the dollars ; he may not be willing to surrender this charming sister to you who will earn millions of francs.”

“ I will not ask him ; I have asked her that is enough ; if he troubles me I will kill him ; there are no brothers in art or genius ; both belong to the world ; no, no, she is mine ; I care for no one, and I know she loves me.”

Bob had never looked for this denouement, and yet what could he have expected less ; he was half tempted to smash the Italian Count in the mouth, as they do on the streets of New York at times ; but no, he would wait and learn what Mary had to say ; he did not believe what the man had said ; he was a boaster, a liar ; but the charm of Mary's marvelous voice had fled from Bob for the night.

Bob had a carriage ready ; it had been arranged Bob was to be at hand to escort her to her home ; she was to

refuse all invitations and declare she needed seclusion ; it had been her own suggestion, and Bob was really delighted to have it so. When the opera was over he was on hand ; he saw Mary, and the little Count was at her side ; and he heard his sister say, "not to-night, not to-night, my dear Count " ; Bob rushed forward and offered Mary his arm, led her to the carriage with much difficulty, but at length the carriage moved away ; Mary was excited and rattled on in an incoherent manner, while Bob was silent and moody ; they reached the hotel and went up to Mary's salon ; the little waif had a salon with her suite of rooms ; once in the room, and the girl exclaimed :

" What do you think, Bob, I can marry a Count, and become a Countess ; isn't that a triumph? "

Bob stood one instant pale, and speechless, and then without one word he darted from the room and Mary laughed with the trilling sweetness of a bird.

CHAPTER VI.

"Well, I declare ! did you ever ?" was Mary's comment. She made no effort to call Bob back and added :

"I never saw him display such a temper before."

Mary waited a few moments and then there came an anxious look to her face, and she muttered :

"I wonder Bob don't come back ; poor boy ? He's had time to cool off."

Bob did not return and a half hour passed and Mary began to pace the floor, and finally she summoned a hall man and wrote :

"Bob, come right here at once."

"Take this to number—my brother's room." she said :

In a few moments the man returned and announced."

"Signor Vernon is not in his room."

"Not in his room ?"

"No."

"Did you knock loud ?"

"The door was open."

"The door was open !" almost screamed Mary ; and without a word she rushed from her own room, through the halls and to the door of Bob's room. Indeed the door was open, and what was more, the room was deserted. She ran down to the office. The night clerk was at hand.

"Have you seen my brother ?" she asked.

"Your brother?" answered the clerk in English, for in her excitement Mary had spoken in her native tongue, and nearly all the clerks in European hotels speak English.

"Yes, my brother ; have you seen him ?"

"Your brother started for London half an hour ago, Mademoiselle."

"My brother started for London half an hour ago," repeated Mary, feeling like one about to fall.

"Yes, he said he was suddenly called to London."

"And could he get a train?"

"The midnight train through to Turin; he will go by the way of Modane and the Mt. Cenis tunnel."

"And the train has gone?"

"He must have just caught it; still it is possible he was too late; if that is so he will be back here in a few minutes."

The clerk looked at the clock.

"I will wait here," said Mary, and even as she spoke the cab returned from the depot. The clerk addressed the driver in Italian, and then turning to Mary informed her that her brother was just in time.

"When does another train go?"

"To-morrow about noon."

Almost blinded by agitation Mary returned to her room. She closed the door and commenced to pace the floor.

"Oh, what have I done! What did I say to cause my brother to rush from me thus madly without one word; yes, without one word; and then suddenly there came a luminous look to her beautiful face and she murmured:

"Now, dear brother, it's all right; yes, yes, it's all right; I see now he's gone; yes, he's gone; it's better so, it will be easier for me, now; yes, easier for me; all is settled; it is better so."

On the table lay a bouquet. She raised it to inhale its fragrance, when something dangled against her wrist. She detached it from the ribbon, and lo, a magnificent ring of great value gleamed under her glance. To the card was attached the name of Count Falvi.

There came a look of great satisfaction and happiness to Mary's face, and later with pleasant thoughts she retired to sleep and dream.

When morning came the manager called upon her. He

was happy. He saw millions in the new singer. Mary waited for him to conclude his congratulations, when she said abruptly :

“ I am going to London.”

“ When ?”

“ At noon to-day.”

“ And you will desert me ; you will treat me thus.”

“ It is a matter of great moment that calls me to London. I will return within a week.”

“ But in four days you are to appear again.”

“ I can take a prima donna's privilege and be sick.”

“ You do not mean to return.”

“ On my honor I will return within seven days. You trust me ; I am an American ; you can not only trust me but aid me.”

“ Aid you ?”

“ Yes.”

“ How ?”

Mary blushed as she drew from her pocket a ring, the gem that had come in her bouquet, and she said in a voice broken with agitation :

“ I wish to borrow some money ; I will leave this with you as a pledge.”

The man spurned the ring and said :

“ No, no, you leave me no pledge ; you shall have all the money you wish ; you are indeed an American lady ; I can trust you, not for the money, no, but that you will return.”

“ If I am alive, I will return.”

“ You will not go to London alone ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Let me accompany you ?”

“ I will not call you away from your business.”

“ I can arrange matters.”

“ Easily ?”

" I can."

" You will go at my expense."

" No, no ; but you will go at mine."

" We must go ; that can all be settled later," said Mary in an impatient tone, " but remember, I go at noon."

" And I will go with you."

At noon Mary and her manager took the train via Turin and Modane for Paris, from whence the excited girl proposed to proceed right on to London.

Meantime Bob had preceded her by twenty-four hours, and our readers may desire an explanation of Bob's singular action. Our hero was a warm-hearted generous, young fellow, and during all the years he had been pushing forward the interests of Mary, he had treated her and thought of her as a sister, and when after thoughts had come into his mind he had repressed them ; but after all there remained a lurking hope that some day he might call her by a dearer title, and he had believed that the denouement would come as a matter of course ; he never dreamed differently until that night when he overheard the words of the Count ; then there came to him a revelation, and a great terror took possession of his heart, and there followed a struggle, a grand struggle, and then the noble nature of Bob prevailed, and he mentally exclaimed :

" It's all right ; I am a fool ; what else could I expect, and I'll not stand in her way, and I'll make short work of it ; I'll not cause her one pang, one moment's distress ; she shall be my sister always ; I will remain devoted to her, and I'll be a bachelor ; it's hard, but it's what I might expect ; it has come sort of sudden, however."

Bob had made up his mind to tell Mary it was all right ; he intended to hide his secret from her forever ; but when in a gleeful tone and manner she told him she was to be a Countess there came a madness to his brain ; he rushed from the room, as described, entered his own room, seized

his gripsack, chucked in his few things and away he sped, and he didn't cool off. He arrived in London in a dazed condition, where he was welcomed back by the manager, for he was a great favorite, and it was arranged that he should be advertised and appear on the following week.

It was on the second night after his arrival in London. He had been to see the "show," and when the performance was over he passed with the crowd to the street. He had not recovered from his disappointment; he was an unhappy young man, and did not permit himself to think; he just moved about like one in a dream; and thus as stated he left the theatre, and was proceeding along really at a mad rate, when suddenly he heard his name called, and turning beheld a lady rushing after him; the lady was veiled, and in a moment joined him; she did not speak for a moment, and Bob demanded:

"What do you want?"

"I am all out of breath, Bob, dear; you're crazy, Bob I am ashamed of you!"

Bob in an instant recognized Mary's voice, and without stopping to think what he was saying, cried out:

"Go away Countess, don't come and patronize me."

"Bob, Bob, dear Bob! What on earth has come over you; why are you so angry at your sister?"

Bob melted in an instant; the magic word sister spoken in such a natural manner dispelled his wrath, and in a changed tone he said:

"No, I ain't mad; no, Sis; I was mad though, it came so sudden."

"What came so sudden?"

"Why, the revelation that you were to become a Countess."

"Well, I am, Bob."

"That's all right, Sis; yes, I was a fool; what else could I expect."

"Now, what else did you expect, Bob?"

"But tell me, Sis, what are you doing in London?"

"I chased you Bob; yes, I came here after you."

"You came here after me?"

"Yes, I did; you ran away in such a strange manner, it almost killed me, and I started right after you; Bob, you didn't answer my question. Bob, I asked you what else you expected?"

"I'll never tell you, Sis."

"Yes, you will."

"Do you want me tell you?"

"You must tell me."

"I did hope, Sis, that some day you might be my wife."

"Do you want me to be your wife?"

"*Do I want you to be my wife?*" almost screamed Bob.

"Do you?"

"Do I? why Sis, stop; you'll drive me mad."

"Did you think, Bob, I'd marry that nasty Italian Count? Why you foolish boy I always expected to be your wife someday; yes, I'd rather be the *Countess of the streets of New York* as your wife, than to be the queen in any kingdom in Christendom."

If one could have seen Bob's eyes at that moment illuminated as they were with a happiness such as comes but once and under similar circumstances in a life.

"Do you mean it, Sis?" he asked.

"Do I mean it Bob; why I have never dreamed of any thing else."

"You are the dearest girl on earth!"

"And to think of your running away, Bob."

"But you drove me crazy when you said you were going to be a Countess."

"I never said that, Bob."

"Hold on, Sis; you may forget, but you said it."

"No, I didn't Bob; I remember exactly what I said."

"What did you say?"

"I said I *could* be a Countess, Bob, that's all."

"And I am a fool, Sis."

"No, you are not a fool; you are a dear, generous, noble, honorable young man—my hero."

"And I am only a waif."

"The same God, Bob, who creates the prince creates the waif, and I will be the Countess Waif if it suits you better."

Bob related how he had overheard the Count talk in the vestibule of La Scala, and Mary laughed.

The two went to supper together, and on the way Bob said:

"Well, Mary, there isn't much I can give you, *not even a name*. I owe my name to you. It was your gift, and I can only return it when you become my wife."

Mary laughed merrily, and said:

"Isn't it odd, Bob, to think of it; but we'll be rich, we'll be happy, and I owe all to you. No matter who we are, it was a benignant fate stalking beside us, poor orphans as we are, and we'll be happier than we would have been were you a prince and I a princess, for all we've got or shall get is a *gain to us*, and consequently it brings us greater happiness."

Bob returned with Mary to Milan. The prima donna kept her word and upon her second appearance scored a greater success than she did the first night, as she appeared in an opera which ever afterward became her greatest role; and we will add that the return to Milan was Bob and Mary's bridal tour, and the Count was almost the first to learn that the great singer who had adopted an Italian stage name, changing her middle name for the purpose, was in private life Mrs. Robert Vernon.

Dear reader, we have little more to add. We would like to reveal our true hero and heroine but honor forbids; but they are to-day models of decorum, and honored on and off the stage as they deserve, and Bob has his country home, a lovely wife and the day dream of his life fulfilled. It is no longer a dream but a reality, and he and his wife deserve it all.

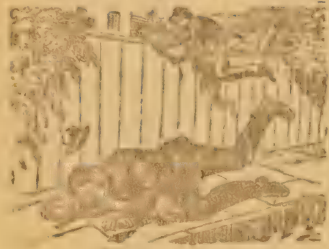
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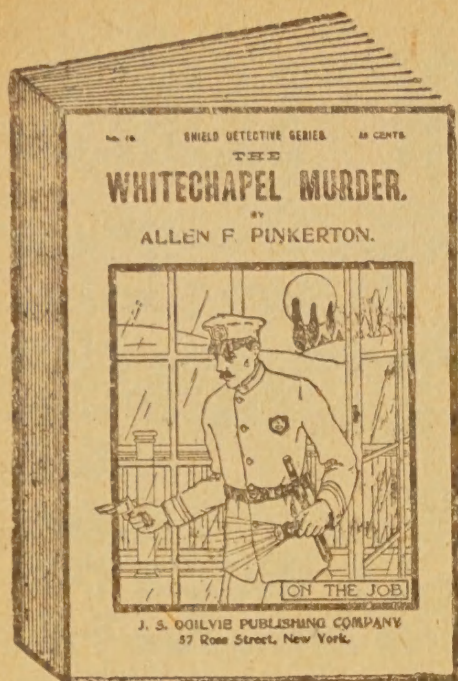
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